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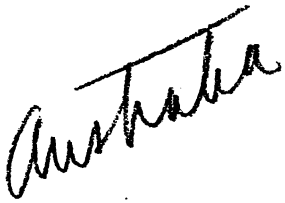

Robt. W. Wilson
to James B Murdoch

Brisbane 18th Feby 1884

—

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

BY

J. BRUNTON STEPHENS,

Author of "Convict Once," "The Godolphin Arabian," &c.

London:
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POEMS.

MY CHINEE COOK.

THEY who say the bush is dull are not so very
far astray,
For this eucalyptic cloisterdom is anything but gay;
But its uneventful dulness I contentedly could brook,
If I only could get back my lost, lamented Chinee cook.

We had tried them without number—cooks, to wit—
my wife and I;
One a week, then three a fortnight, as my wife can testify;
But at last we got the right one; I may say 'twas
by a fluke,
For he dropped in miscellaneous-like, that handy
Chinee cook.

He found the kitchen empty, laid his swag down, and
commenced;
My wife, surprised, found nothing to say anything
against;
But she asked him for how much a year the work he
undertook—
"Me workee for me ration," said that noble Chinee
cook.

Then right off from next to nothing such a dinner
he prepared,
That the Governor I'm certain less luxuriously
fared;
And he waited, too, in spotless white, with such
respectful look,
And bowed his head when grace was said, that pious
Chinee cook.

He did the work of man and maid—made beds
and swept out rooms;
Nor cooled he in his zeal, as is the manner of new
brooms:
Oh, he shed celestial brightness on the most seques-
tered nook,
For his mop and pail were everywhere—my cleanly
Chinee cook.

We got fat upon his cooking; we were happy in
those days,
For he tickled up our palates in a thousand pleasant
ways.
Oh his dinners! Oh his dinners! they were fit for
any duke!
Oh delectable Mongolian! Oh celestial Chinee
cook!

There was nothing in creation that he didn't put
to use,
And the less he got to cook with, all the more he
could produce.
All nature was his kitchen range, likewise his cook'ry
book—
Neither Soyer nor Meg Dod could teach that
knowing Chinee cook.

And day by day upon my wife and me the mystery
grew,
How his virtues were so many and his earnings
were so few;
And we laid our heads together to find out by hook
or crook,
The secret of the cheapness of that priceless Chinee
cook.

And still the sense of mystery grew on us day by day,
Till it came to be a trouble, and we wished him well away;
But we could not find a fault in one so far above rebuke—
Ah, we didn't know the value of that valuable cook.

But one day when I was out he brought my wife a lot of things,
Turquoise earrings, opal bracelets, ruby brooches, diamond rings,
And he ran their various prices o'er as glibly as a book,
And dirt cheap, too, were the jewels of that jewel of a cook.

I returned, and just in time to stop the purchase of
the lot,
And to ask him where on earth those costly jewels
he had got,
And when I looked him in the face, good gracious
how he shook!
And he says, says he, "Me bought him"—did that
trembling Chinee cook.

And I a justice of the peace! O Fortune! how
unkind!
For a certain Sydney robbery came rushing to my
mind.
"You bought them! Ah, I fear me, John, you paid
them with a hook!
I am bound to apprehend you, oh unhappy Chinee
cook!"

So the mystery was solved at length; the secret
now we saw;
John had used us as a refuge from the clutches of
the law;
And now, alas, too late would I his frailty over-
look!
He is gone, and I am left without my skilful Chinee
cook.

Oh, could I taste again of those delicious luscious
things,
I could pardon him the robbery of other people's
rings;
I exaggerated principle, my duty I mistook,
When I handed over to the law my peerless Chinee
cook.

What would I give just now for one of his superb
ragouts,
His entremets, his entrées, his incomparable stews;
Oh, art and taste and piquancy my happy board
forsook,
When I came the J.P. over my lamented Chinee cook.

Take away the hated letters. 'Twas my "justice
robbed my "peace";
Take my name from the commission, and my
matchless cook release.
But I fear my Johnny's dead, for I am haunted by
a spook,
With oblique eyes and a pigtail, like my lost, my
Chinee cook.

MY OTHER CHINEE COOK.

YES, I got another Johnny; but he was to Number One
As a Satyr to Hyperion, as a rushlight to the sun;
He was lazy, he was cheeky, he was dirty, he was sly,
But he had a single virtue, and its name was rabbit pie.

Now those who say the bush is dull are not so far astray,
For the neutral tints of station life are anything but gay;
But, with all its uneventfulness, I solemnly deny
That the bush is unendurable along with rabbit pie.

We had fixed one day to sack him, and agreed to moot
the point
When my lad should bring our usual regale of cindered
joint,
But instead of cindered joint we saw and smelt, my
wife and I,
Such a lovely, such a beautiful, oh! such a rabbit
pie!

There was quite a new expression on his lemon-
coloured face,
And the unexpected odour won him temporary
grace,
For we tacitly postponed the sacking-point till
by-and-bye,
And we tacitly said nothing save the one word
"rabbit pie!"

I had learned that pleasant mystery should simply be endured,
And forbore to ask of Johnny where the rabbits were procured;
I had learned from Number One to stand aloof from how and why,
And I threw myself upon the simple fact of rabbit pie.

And when the pie was opened, what a picture did we see!
They lay in beauty side by side, they filled our home with glee!
How excellent, how succulent, back, neck, and leg, and thigh!
What a noble gift is manhood! What a trust is rabbit pie!

For a week the thing continued, rabbit pie from day to
day;
Though where he got the rabbits John would ne'er
vouchsafe to say;
But we never seemed to tire of them, and daily could
descry
Subtle shades of new delight in each successive rabbit
pie.

Sunday came; by rabbit reckoning, the seventh day of
the week;
We had dined, we sat in silence, both our hearts (?) too
full to speak;
When in walks Cousin George, and, with a sniff, says
he, "Oh my!
What a savoury suggestion! what a smell of rabbit
pie!"

"Oh, why so late, George?" says my wife, "the rabbit
pie is gone;
But you *must* have one for tea though. Ring the bell,
my dear, for John."
So I rang the bell for John, to whom my wife did
signify,
"Let us have an early tea, John, and another rabbit
pie."

But John seemed taken quite aback, and shook his
funny head,
And uttered words I comprehended no more than the
dead;
"Go, do as you are bid," I cried, "we wait for no
reply;
Go! let us have tea early, and another rabbit
pie!"

Oh, that I had stopped his answer! But it came out
with a run:
"Last-a week-a plenty puppy; this-a week-a puppy
done!"
Just then my wife, my love, my life, the apple of mine
eye,
Was seized with what seemed "mal-de-mer,"—"sick
transit" rabbit pie!

And George! By George, he laughed, and then he
howled like any bear!
The while my wife contorted like a mad "convulsion-
naire;"
And I—I rushed on Johnny, and I smote him hip and
thigh,
And I never saw him more, nor tasted more of rabbit
pie.

And the childless mothers met me, as I kicked him
from the door,
With loud maternal wailings and anathemas galore;
I must part with pretty Tiny, I must part with little
Fly,
For I'm sure they know the story of the so-called
"rabbit pie."

TO A BLACK GIN.

DAUGHTER of Eve, draw near—I would behold
thee.

Good Life! Could ever arm of man enfold thee!

Did the same Nature that made Phryne mould thee?

Come close to leeward: for thy balmy presence

Savoureth not a whit of [illegible]:—

My nose is no mere [illegible].

Thou art not beautiful: I tell thee plainly,

Oh thou ungainliest of things ungainly;

Who thinks thee less than hideous does insanely

Most unæsthetical of things terrestrial,
Hadst thou indeed an origin celestial?—
Thy lineaments are positively bestial!

Yet thou my sister art, the clergy tell me;
Though, truth to state, thy brutish looks compel me
To hope these parsons merely want to *sell* me.

A hundred times and more I 've heard and read it;
But if Saint Paul himself came down and said it,
Upon my soul I could not give it credit.

"God's image cut in ebony," says some one;
'Tis to be hoped some day thou may'st become one;
The present image is a very rum one.

Thy face "the human face divine"! . . . Oh, Moses!
Whatever trait divine thy face discloses,
Some vile Olympian cross-play pre-supposes.

Thy nose appeareth but a transverse section:
Thy mouth hath no particular direction,—
A flabby-rimmed abyss of imperfection.

Thine eyes are set in bile, thou filthy smoker!
The very whites of them are yellow ochre:—
"The windows of the soul"!!—Another choker.

Thy skull development mine eye displeases;
Thou wilt not suffer much from brain diseases;
Thy facial angle forty-five degrees is.

The coarseness of thy tresses is distressing,
With grease and raddle firmly coalescing.
I cannot laud thy system of "top-dressing."

Thy dress is somewhat scant for proper feeling;
As is thy flesh, too,—scarce thy bones concealing:
Thy calves unquestionably want re-*veal*ing.

Thy mangy skin is hideous with tattooing,
And legible with hieroglyphic wooing—
Sweet things in art of some fierce lover's doing.

For thou some lover hast, I bet a guinea,—
Some partner in thy fetid ignominy,
The *raison d'être* of this piccaninny.

What must *he* be whose eye thou hast delighted!
His sense of beauty hopelessly benighted!
The canons of his taste how badly sighted!

What must his gauge be, if thy features pleased him?
If lordship of such limbs as thine appeased him,
It was not "*calf*-love" certainly that seized him.

And is he amorously sympathetic?
And doth he kiss thee? . . . Oh my soul prophetic!
The very notion is a strong emetic!

And doth he smooth thine hours with oily talking?
And take thee conjugally out-a-walking?
And crown thy transports with a tom-a-hawking?

I guess his love and anger are combined so;
His passions on thy shoulders are defined so;
"His passages of love" are *underlined* so.

Tell me thy name. What?.. Helen?... (Oh, Œnone,
That name bequeathed to one so foul and bony
Avengeth well thy ruptured matrimony!)

Eve's daughter! with that skull! and that complexion?
What principle of "Natural Selection"
Gave thee with Eve the most remote connection?

Sister of L. E. L. . . . of Mrs. Stowe, too!
Of E. B. Browning! Harriet Martineau, too!
Do theologians know where fibbers go to?

Of dear George Eliot, whom I worship daily!
Of Charlotte Brontë! and Joanna Baillie!—
Methinks that theory is rather "scaly."

Thy primal parents came a period later—
The handiwork of some vile imitator;
I fear they had the devil's *imprimatur.*

This in the retrospect.—Now, what's before thee?
The white man's heaven, I fear, would simply bore thee;
Ten minutes of doxology would floor thee.

Thy Paradise should be some land of Goshen,
Where appetite should be thy sole devotion,
And surfeit be the climax of emotion;—

A land of Bunya-bunyas towering splendid,—
Of honey-bags on every tree suspended,—
A Paradise of sleep and riot blended;—

Of tons of 'baccy, and tons more to follow,—
Of wallaby as much as thou couldst swallow,—
Of hollow trees, with 'possums in the hollow;—

There, undismayed by frost, or flood, or thunder,
As joyous as the skies thou roamest under,
There shouldst thou . . . Cooey! . . Stop! She's off
. . . No wonder.

A PICCANINNY.

LO by the "humpy" door, a smockless Venus!
Unblushing bronze, she shrinks not, having seen us,
Though there is nought but short couch-grass between us.

She hath no polonaise, no Dolly Varden;
Yet turns she not away, nor asketh pardon;
Fact is, she doesn't care a copper "farden."

Ah yet, her age her reputation spareth;
At three years old pert Venus little careth,
She puts her hand upon her hip and stareth;

All unabashed, unhaberdashed, unheeding,
No Medicean, charmingly receding,
But quite unconscious of improper breeding.

'Tis well; it smacks of Eden ere came sin in,
Or any rag of consciousness or linen,
Or anything that one could stick a pin in.

Could boundaries be neater? posture meeter?
Could bronze antique or terra cotta beat her?
Saw ever artist any thing completer?

A shade protuberant, beyond contesting,
Where this day's 'possum is just now digesting,
But otherwise, all over interesting;

Trim without trimming, furbelow, or bow on;
Was ever sable skin with such a glow on?
So darkly soft, so softly sleek, and—so on?

Did ever fingers scratch a head so woolly?
Took ever child the outer world so coolly,
Though Fahrenheit's at ninety-seven fully?

Was ever known so dark, so bright an iris,
Where sleep of light, but never play of fire is—
Where not a soupçon of a wild desire is?

Oh swarthy statuette! hast thou no notion
That life is fire and war and wild commotion?
A burning bush, a chafed and raging ocean?

Hast thou no questioning of what's before thee?
Of who shall envy thee, or who adore thee?
Or whose the jealous weapon that shall score thee?

Hast thou no faint prevision of disaster—
Of dark abduction from thy lord and master—
Of aliens fleeing, kindred following faster?

No faint forehearing of the waddies banging,
Of club and heelaman together clanging,
War shouts, and universal boomeranging?

And thou the bone of all the fierce contention—
The direful spring of broken-nosed dissension—
A Helen in the nigger apprehension?

Nay, my black tulip, I congratulate thee,
Thou canst not guess the troubles that await thee,
Nor carest who shall love or who shall hate thee:

Recking as little of the human passions
As of the very latest Paris fashions,
And soaring not beyond thy daily rations!

Die young, for mercy's sake! If thou grow older,
Thou shalt grow lean at calf and sharp at shoulder,
And daily greedier and daily bolder;

A pipe between thy savage grinders thrusting,
For rum and everlasting 'baccy lusting,
And altogether filthy and disgusting.

Just such another as the dam that bore thee—
That haggard Sycorax now bending o'er thee!
Die young, my sable pippin, I implore thee!

Why shouldst thou live to know deterioration?
To walk, a spectre of emaciation?
To grow, like that, all over corrugation?

A trifle miscellaneous like her, too,
An object not "de luxe" and not "de vertu"—
A being odious even to refer to?

Her childhood, too, like thine, was soft and tender;
Her womanhood hath nought to recommend her;
At thirty she is not of any gender.

Oh, dusky fondling, let the warning teach thee!
Through muddiest brain-pulp may the lesson reach thee!
Oh, die of something fatal, I beseech thee!

While yet thou wear'st the crown of morning graces,
While yet the touch of dawn upon thy face is—
Back, little nigger, to the night's embraces!

Hope nought: each year some new defect discloses;
As sure as o'er thy mouth thy little nose is,
Thy only hope is in metempsychosis.

Who knows but after some few short gradations,
After a brace or so of generations,
We two may have exchanged our hues and stations?

Methinks I see thee suddenly grow bigger,
White in the face, and stately in the figure,
And I a miserable little nigger!

Should this be thus—oh come not moralising!
Approach not thou my humpy poetising!
Spare thine Iambics and apostrophising!

Let subtle nature, if it suit her, black me,
Let vesture lack me, bigger niggers whack me,
Let hunger rack me, let disaster track me,
And anguish hoist me to her highest acme—

Let me bear all thine incidental curses,
Nor share the smallest of thy scanty mercies,
But put me not—oh, put me not in verses!

She grins. She heedeth not advice or warning,
Alike philosophy and triplets scorning.
Adieu, then. Fare thee well. Ta-ta. Good morning.

"BIG BEN."

DIED AT YAAMBA CREEK, JULY, 1872.

DE mortuis nil ni-
Si bonum: R.I.P.:—
No more upbraid him:—
Nay, rather plead his cause,
For Ben exactly was
What Nature made him.

Not radically bad,
He naturally had
No leaning sinwards;
But Nature saw it good
One life-long crave for food
Should rack his inwards.

According to his lights,
And to the appetites
In him implanted,
He did his level best
To feed—and all the rest
He took for granted.

Ere birth he was *laid* low,
And yet no man I know
For high birth matched him;
Apollo was his sire,
Who with life-giving fire
Ab ovo hatched him.

Just over Capricorn
This same Big Ben was born,
A feeble lizard;
But with the years came strength,
And twenty feet of length—
The most part gizzard.

By Fitzroy's rugged crags,
Its "sawyers" and its snags,
He roamed piscivorous;
Or watching for his prey,
By Yaamba creek he lay,
In mood carnivorous.

Unthinking little hogs,
And careless puppy-dogs
Fitzroy-ward straying,
Were grist unto his mill. . . . .
His grinders now are still,
Himself past *preying*.

Whether in self-defence,
Or out of hate *prepense*,
Or just for fun shot,
Are things beyond my ken—
I only know Big Ben
Died of a gunshot.

It was a sorry case;
For Ben loved all our race,
Both saint and sinner;
If he had had his way,
He would have brought each day
One home to dinner:—

Loved with that *longing* love,
Such as is felt above
The Southern Tropic:—
Small chance was ever his,
But his proclivities
Were philanthropic.

There are who would insist
He was a misogynist,—
'Tis slander horrid;
For every nymph he saw,
He would have liked her—raw,
From toe to forehead.

Then let his memory be;
No misanthrope was he;
No woman-hater;
But just what you may call,
Take him for all in all,
An *alli*gator.

ADELAIDE IRONSIDE.

(Australian Painter. Born at Sydney, November 17, 1831. Died at Rome, April 15, 1867.)

[GUARDIAN ANGEL.]

KNOWEST thou now, Oh Love! Oh pure from the death of thy summer of sweetness!
Seest thou now, Oh new-born Delight of the Ransomed and Free!
We have gathered the flower for the fruit; we have hastened the hour of thy meetness;
For thou wert sealed unto us, and thine Angel hath waited for thee.

Not in disdain, Oh Love! Oh Sweet! of desires that
are earthly and mortal,
Not in the scorn of thine Art, whose beginning and
end is Divine,
So soon have we borne thee asleep through the glow
of the uttermost portal,
But in the ruth of high souls that have travailed
with longings like thine.

Nothing is lost, Oh Love! Oh mine! and thy
seemingly broken endeavour
Here re-appeareth, transfigured as thou; yet the
Art of thy youth;
And the light of the Spirit of Beauty is on it for ever
and ever;
For Art is the garment of Praise, and the broidered
apparel of Truth.

Seest thou now, Oh Love! how Art, in a way to
mortality nameless,
Liveth again, soul-informed, love sustained, self-
completing, for aye?
How thy heart's purpose was good, and the dream of
thy maidenhood blameless,—
How thy fair dawn is fulfilled in the light of ineffable
day?

Seest thou now, Oh Love! Oh Fair! how the high
spirit-life is Art regnant—
Art become bliss, and harmonious response to the
Infinite Will?
Fused and transfused into Love, with the germs of
eternity pregnant—
Crowned as the law of the beauty of Holiness;
throned, yet Art still?

Not then in vain, Oh Love! thy dawn, nor the dream
of thy holy ambition;
Never a trace of thy finger hath witnessed for Beauty
in vain;
In the bloom of the noon of thine ardour thy soul
became fair for fruition;
We have smitten the green into gold but to spare
thee the harvest of pain.

Nothing that came from thy hand, Oh Love, made
void, cut off, evanescent,—
From the infantile essay that strove with the
weapon of outline alone,
To the Angels thou lovedst to pourtray with luminous
plumes iridescent,
Till thy soul drew so near unto us that we took thee
for one of our own.

Now may'st thou trace, Oh Heart! Sweet Heart! from
on high all the way I have led thee,
From the youth of a world in the Seas of the South
to unperishing Rome;
For the lure of thy following soul was the sheen of my
wings that o'erspread thee,
Flushing with reflex of glory the path of thy
pilgrimage—home.

By the way of the age of the world I have chosen to
lead thee to glory;
Of the wine of the might of the world have I given
thee to drink ere thou slept;
Where the Masters have walked I have laid thee,
ensphered with the darlings of story;
I have waked thee a perfected spirit; matured,
yet thine innocence kept.

There, too, I led thee to feed thee with prescience and keen intimation
Of the art-adjuvant Grace that hath given thee, a love-gift, to me;
By the work of my hands did I wake in thee foretaste of Transfiguration,—
For thine Angel once wrought upon earth as thou; and his work thou did'st see.

Now is thy spirit, Oh Love; in mine. In thy heart I behold thou dost know me.
I looked for thy glad recognition; no converse of aliens is this;
Oft when thy longings went upward, thy soul, like a mirror below me,
Caught my own loveliest visions in shapes of Elysian bliss.

Name me not now, Oh Love! Oh mine! for the name
of my days of way-faring
Still hath the note of a fevered desire, and an echo
of pain.
Come thou, Oh Gift of long hope, to the home of
thine Angel's preparing;
There I shall show thee the mercy of God, and the
things that remain.

THE DARK COMPANION.

THERE is an orb that mocked the lore of sages
Long time with mystery of strange unrest;
The steadfast law that rounds the starry ages
Gave doubtful token of supreme behest.

But they who knew the ways of God unchanging,
Concluded some far influence unseen—
Some kindred sphere through viewless ethers ranging,
Whose strong persuasions spanned the void between.

And knowing it alone through perturbation
And vague displeet of another star,
Ever named it till the day of revelation,
"The Dark Companion"—darkly guessed afar.

But when through new perfection of appliance,
Faith merged at length in undisputed sight,
The mystic mover was revealed to science,
No Dark Companion, but—a speck of light.

No Dark Companion, but a sun of glory;
No fell disturber, but a bright compeer;
The shining complement that crowned the story;
The golden link that made the meaning clear.

Oh, Dark Companion, journeying ever by us,
Oh, grim Perturber of our works and ways,
Oh, potent Dread, unseen, yet ever nigh us,
Disquieting all the tenor of our days—

Oh, Dark Companion, Death, whose wide embraces
O'ertake remotest change of clime and skies—
Oh, Dark Companion, Death, whose grievous traces
Are scattered shreds of riven enterprise—

Thou, too, in this wise, when, our eyes unsealing,
The clearer day shall change our faith to sight,
Shalt show thyself in that supreme revealing
No Dark Companion, but a thing of light.

No ruthless wrecker of harmonious order;
No alien heart of discord and caprice;
A beckoning light upon the Blissful Border;
A kindred element of law and peace.

So, too, our strange unrest in this our dwelling,
The trembling that thou joinest with our mirth,
Are but thy magnet-communings compelling
Our spirits farther from the scope of earth.

So, doubtless, when beneath thy potence swerving,
'Tis that thou lead'st us by a path unknown,
Our seeming deviations all subserving
The perfect orbit round the central throne.

* * * * *

The night wind moans. The Austral wilds are round
me.
The loved who live—ah, God! how few they are!
I looked above; and Heaven in mercy found me
This parable of comfort in a star.

THE SOUTHERN CROSS.

(A FRUSTRATION.)

FOUR stars on Night's brow, or Night's bosom,
Whichever the reader prefers;
Or Night without either may do some,
Each one to his taste or to hers.
Four stars—to continue inditing,
So long as I feel in the vein—
Hullo! what the deuce is that biting?
Mosquitos again!

Oh glories not gilded but golden,
  Oh daughters of Night unexcelled,
By the sons of the north unbeholden,
  By our sons (if we have them) beheld;
Oh jewels the midnight enriching,
  Oh four which are double of twain!
Oh mystical—bother the itching!
                Mosquitos again!

You alone I can anchor my eye on,
  Of you and you only I 'll write:
And I now look awry on Orion,
  That once was my chiefest delight.
Ye exalt me high over the petty
  Conditions of pleasure and pain—
Oh Heaven! Here are these maladetti
                Mosquitos again!

The poet should ever be placid.
Oh vex not his soul or his skin!
Shall I stink them with carbolic acid?
It is done and afresh I begin.
Lucid orbs!—that last sting very sore is;
I am fain to leave off, I am fain;
It has given me uncommon dolores—
The Latin for pain.

Not quite what the shape of a cross is—
A little lop-sided, I own—
Confound your infernal proboscis,
Inserted well nigh to the bone!
Queen-lights of the heights of high heaven,
Ensconced in the crystal inane—
Oh me, here are seventy times seven
Mosquitos again!

Oh horns of a mighty trapezium !
  Quadrilateral area, hail !
Oh bright is the light of magnesium !—
  Oh hang them all, female and male !
At the end of an hour of their stinging,
  What shall rest of me then, what remain ?
I shall die as the swan dieth, singing,
                Mosquitos again !

Shock keen as the stroke of the leven !
  They sting, and I change in a flash
From the peace and the poppies of heaven
  To the flame and the firewood of—dash !
Oh Cross of the South, I forgot you !
  These demons have addled my brain.
Once more I look upward. . . Od rot you !
                You 're at it again !

There! stick in your pitiless brad-awl,
And do your malevolent worst!
Dine on me and when you have had all,
Let others go in for a burst!
Oh silent and pure constellation,
Can you pardon my fretful refrain?
Forgive, oh forgive my vexation—
They're at it again!

Oh imps that provoke to mad laughter,
Winged fiends that are fed from my brow,
Bite hard! let your neighbours come after,
And sting where you stung me just now!
Red brands on it smitten and bitten,
Round blotches I rub at in vain!
Oh Crux! whatsoever I've written,
I've written in pain.

Ye chrysolite crystalline creatures,
  Wan watchers the fairest afield,
Stars—and garters, are these my own features
  In the merciless mirror revealed!
They are mine, even mine, and none other,
  And my hands how they slacken and strain!
Oh my sister, my spouse, and my mother!
  I 'm going insane!

A BRISBANE REVERIE.

MARCH, 1873.

AS I sit beside my little study window, looking
down
From the heights of contemplation (attic front) upon
the town—
(Attic front, per week—with board, of course—a
sov'reign and a crown);—

As I sit—(these sad digressions, though, are much to
be deplored)—
In my lonely little attic—(it is all I can afford;
And I should have mentioned, washing *not* included
in the board);—

As I sit—(these wild parentheses my very soul abhors)—
High above the ills of life, its petty rumours, paltry wars—
(The attic back is cheaper, but it wants a chest of drawers);—

In the purpling light of half-past six before the stars are met,
While the stricken sun clings fondly to his royal mantle yet,
Dying glorious on the hill-tops in reluctant violet,—

Just the time that favours vision, blissful moments that unbar
The inner sight (assisted by a very mild cigar),
To behold the things that are not, side by side with those that are,—

Just the very light and very time that suit the bard's
complaint,
When through present, past, and future, roams his
soul without restraint—
When no clearer are the things that are than are the
things that ain't;—

With a dual apperception, metaphysical, profound,
Past and present running parallel, I scan the scene
around—
(Were there two of us the attic front would only be a
pound).—

Beneath mine eyes the buried past arises from the
tomb,
Not cadaverous or ghostly, but in all its living
bloom—
(I would rather pay the odds than have a partner in
my room).

How the complex *now* contrasteth with the elemental
then!
Tide of change outflowing flow of ink, outstripping
stride of pen!
(Unless it were, ... but no . . . . they only take in
single men).

Where trackless wilderness lay wide, a hundred ages
through—
I can see a man with papers, from my attic point of
view,
Who for gath'ring house assessments gets a very
decent screw.

Where forest-contiguity assuaged the summer heats,
It is now an argued question, when the City Council
meets,
If we mightn't buy a tree or two to shade the glaring
streets.

Where no sound announced the flight of time, not
even crow of cock,
I can see the gun that stuns the town with monitory
shock,
And a son of that same weapon hired to shoot at
1 o'clock.

Where the kangaroo gave hops, the "old man" fleetest
of the fleet,
Mrs. Pursy gives a "hop" to-night to all the town's
élite,
But her "old man" cannot hop because of bunions
on his feet.

Where the emu, "at its own sweet will," went
wandering all the day,
And left its bill-prints on whate'er came handy in its
way,
There are printed bills that advertise "The Emu for
the Bay."

Where of old with awful mysteries and diabolic
din,
They "kippered" adolescents in the presence of their
kin,
There's a grocer selling *herrings* kippered, half-a-crown
per tin.

Where the savage only used his club to supplement
his fist,
The white man uses his for friendly intercourse and
whist,
Not to mention sherry, port, bordeaux, et cetera—see
list.

Where dress was at a discount, or at most a modest
"fall,"
Rise "Criterion," "Cosmopolitan," and "City
Clothing Hall,"
And neither men nor women count for much—the
dress is all.

Where a bride's trousseau consisted of an extra coat of
grease,
And Nature gave the pair a suit of glossy black
apiece,
Now the matrimonial outfit is a perfect golden
fleece.

Where lorn widows wore the knee-joints of the late
lamented dead,
We have dashing wives who wear their living husbands'
joints instead—
Yea, their vitals, for embellishment of bosom, neck,
and head.

Where the blacks, ignoring livers, lived according to
their wills,
Nor knew that flesh is heir to quite a lexicon of
ills,
Five white chemists in one street grow rich through
antibilious pills.

Where the only bell was the bell-bird's note, now many
mingling bells
"Make Catholic the trembling air," as famed George
Eliot tells
Of another town somewhere between more northern
parallels.

(But in case the name of Catholic offend protesting
ear,
Let Wesleyan or Baptist be interpolated here,
Or that bells make Presbyterian the trembling
atmosphere.)

Where the savage learned no love from earth, nor
from the "shining frame,"
And merely feared the devil under some outlandish
name,
There are heaps of Britishers whose creed is—very
much the same!

Where the gin was black—(methinks 'tis time the bard
were shutting up :
The bell is ringing for the non-inebriating cup,
And even attic bards must have their little "bite and
sup").

A LOST CHANCE.

[It is stated that a shepherd, who had for many years grazed his flocks in the district in which a rich tin-mining town in Queensland now stands, went mad on learning of the great discoveries made there.]

JUST to miss it by a hair's breadth! Nay, not miss
it! To have held it.
In my hand, and ofttimes through my fingers run
the swarthy ore!
Minus only the poor trick of Art or Science that
compelled it
To unveil for others' good the hidden value, and to
pour
On a thousand hearts the light of Hope, that shines
for *me* no more!

To have held it in my hand in vacant listlessness of wonder,
Taken with its dusky lustre, all incurious of its worth—
To have trod for years upon it, I above, and Fortune under—
To have scattered it a thousand times like seed upon the earth!
Who shall say I am not justified who curse my day of birth?

To have built my hovel o'er it—to have dreamed above it nightly—
Pillowed on the weal of thousand lives, and dead unto my own!
Planning paltry profits wrung from year-long toil, and holding lightly
What lay acres-wide around me, naked-bright, or grass-o'ergrown—
Holding lightly—and for that I curse—no, not myself alone!

For a youth made vain with riot, for the golden graces squandered,
Home forsaken, dear ones alienated, Love itself aggrieved,
I had sworn a full atonement, to the ends of earth had wandered,
Drunk the dregs of expiation, unbelauded, unperceived—
Heav'n alone beheld, and—mocks me with what "might have been" achieved!

All the cold suspicion of the world I took for my demerit,
Its deceit my retribution, its malignity my meed:
When Misfortune smote, unmurmuring I bowed my head to bear it,
Driven to minister to brutes in my extremity of need—
Who shall say *now* it delights not Heaven to break the bruised reed?

In the round of conscious being, from the rising to the setting
Of Thine imaged self, Thy merciless, unsympathising Sun,
Was there one from hard Disaster's hand so piteously shrinking
Whom this boon had more advantaged? God, I ask Thee, was there one?
In Thy passionless immunity, Thou knowest there was none!

To the wrongs the world hath wrought me, to its coldness and disfavour,
To the wreck of every venture, to enduring unsuccess,
To the sweat of cheerless toil, the bread made bitter with the savour
Of the leaven of regret, and tears of unforgetfulness,
Hadst thou need to add Thy mockery, to perfect my distress?

For I hold it cruel mockery in man, or God, or devil,
To assign the poor his blindfold lot from weary day to day,
In the very lap of Affluence, on Fortune's highest level,
Then upon the brink of revelation, trick his steps away,
And flash the truth upon him when the chance is gone for aye!

I had soothed repulse with hope, matched disappointment with defiance,
Or opposed a pliant meekness to the driving storms of Fate:
But—the merely "coming short!" Oh, what remedial appliance,
What demeanour of resistance shall have virtue to abate
The nameless woe that trembles in the echo of Too Late!

Oh, the might have been! the might have been! the sting of it! the madness!

What a wave of the Inexorable chokes my fitful breath!

What a rush of olden echoes voiced with many-sounding sadness!

What a throng of new despairs that drive me down the path of death!

Who is there in heaven who careth? Who on earth who comforteth?

They on earth but seek their own. In eager crowds they hasten thither

Where I trod so late unconscious on futurities untold.

And I! I, whose all is gone! The curse of desolation wither—

Whom?—Myself, who, year-worn, turned again unto the sin of old?

Or the fiends who sold me poison for my little all of gold?

Both! All men! Yea, Heaven! But chiefly those
who prosper where I languished!
Those who reap the ripe occasion, where in many
a wandering line,
The old traces of my footsteps, worn in fevered
moods and anguished,
Now are paths of rich expectancy for other feet
than mine!
Can I breathe without upbraiding? Shall I die
without a sign?

It was mine! *Is* mine, by Heaven! Consecrated to
me only,
By the sacred right of service, by the pledge of
weary years!
By the bond of silent witness, by communion dumb
and lonely,
By the seal of many sorrows, by the sacrament
of tears!
Mine!—The echoes laugh, and the fiends of hell
are answering with jeers.

* * * * *

Where am I? and who are these?—Nay, nay!
Unhand me! Let me go, sirs!
I am very very rich! I've miles on miles of priceless ore!
I will make your fortunes—all of you!—and I would have you know, sirs—
There is not a single sheep amissing—Loose me, I implore!
It is only sleep that ails me—let me sleep—for evermore!

THE SQUATTER'S BACCY FAMINE.

IN blackest gloom he cursed his lot;
His breath was one long weary sigh;
His brows were gathered in a knot
That only baccy could untie.
His oldest pipe was scraped out clean;
The deuce a puff was left him there;
A hollow sucking sound of air
Was all he got his lips between.
He only said "My life is dreary,
The Baccy's done," he said.
He said, "I am aweary, aweary;
By Jove, I'm nearly dead."

The chimney-piece he searched in vain,
Into each pocket plunged his fist;
His cheek was blanched with weary pain,
His mouth awry for want of twist.
He idled with his baccy-knife;
He had no care for daily bread:—
A single stick of Negro-head
Would be to him the staff of life.
He only said, "My life is dreary.
The Baccy's done," he said.
He said, "I am aweary, aweary;
I'd *most as soon* be dead."

Books had no power to mend his grief;
The magazines could tempt no more;
"Cut Gold-Leaf" was the only leaf
That he had cared to ponder o'er.
From chair to sofa sad he swings,
And then from sofa back to chair;

But in the depth of his despair
Can catch no "bird's-eye" view of things.
And still he said, "My life is dreary.
No Baccy, boys," he said.
He said, "I am aweary, aweary;
I'd *just as soon* be dead."

His meals go by he knows not how;
No taste in flesh, or fowl, or fish;
There 's not a dish could tempt him now,
Except a cake of Caven-dish.
His life is but a weary drag;
He cannot choose but curse and swear,
And thrust his fingers through his hair,
All shaggy in the want of shag.
And still he said, "My life is dreary.
No Baccy, boys," he said.
He said, "I am aweary, aweary;
I'd *rather far* be dead."

To him one end of old chefoot
Were sweetest root that ever grew.
No honey were due substitute
For "Our Superior Honey-Dew."
One little fig of Latakia
Would buy all fruits of Paradise;
"Prince Alfred's Mixture" fetch a price
Above both Prince and Galatea.
Sudden he said, "No more be dreary!
The dray has come!" he said.
He said, "I'll smoke till I am weary,—
And then, I'll go to bed."

THE ANTIPODES.

A TOWN, a river, hills and trees,
Blue-bounded by the boundless sky—
Is this the strange antipodes
That baffled young credulity?

Once on a time, of childhood's dreams
This was the very cap and crown;
But now how natural it seems
That down is up, and up is down!

Things on the whole don't look askew:
It's "all serene," somehow or other;
And yet 'tis veritably true
That I am treading on my mother!

Oh, mother dear, forgive the act,
Great Nature's laws my steps control:—
Love leaps o'er all; we are, in fact,
Now more than ever sole to sole!

SPIRIT AND STAR.

THROUGH the bleak cold voids, through the
wilds of space,
Trackless and starless, forgotten of grace,—
Through the dusk that is neither day nor night,
Through the grey that is neither dark nor light—
Through thin chill ethers where dieth speech,
Where the pulse of the music of heaven cannot reach,
Unwarmed by the breath of living thing,
And for ever unswept of angel's wing—
Through the cold, through the void, through the wilds
of space,
With never a home or a resting-place,
How far must I wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

Once on a time unto me was given
The fairest star in the starry heaven—
A little star, to tend and to guide,
To nourish and cherish and love as a bride.
Far from all great bright orbs, alone,
Even to few of the angels known,
It moved; but a sweet pale light on its face
From the sapphire foot of the throne of grace,
That was better than glory and more than might,
Made it a wonder of quiet delight.
Still must I wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

On the starry brow was the peace of the blest,
And bounteous peace on the starry breast;
All beautiful things were blossoming there,
Sighing their loves to the delicate air:
No creature of God such fragrance breathed,
White-rose-girdled and white-rose-wreathed:

And its motion was music, an undertone,
With a strange sad sweetness all its own,
Dearer to me than the louder hymn
Of the God-enraptured seraphim.—
How far must I wander? Ah Heaven, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

In a round of joy, remote and alone,
Yet ever in sight of the great white throne,
Together we moved, for a love divine
Had blent the life of the star with mine:—
And had all the angels of all the spheres
Forecast my fate and foretold my tears,
The weary wand'ring, the gruesome gloom,
And bruited them forth through the Trump of Doom—
Hiding a smile in my soul, I had moved
Only the nearer to what I loved.
Yet I must wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

Ah woe the delusive demon-light
That beckoned me, beckoned me, day and night!—
The untwining of heartstrings, the backward glance,
The truce with faith, and the severance!
Ah woe the unfolding of wayward wings
That bore me away from all joyous things,
To realms of space whence the pale sweet gleam
Looked dim as a dimly-remembered dream—
To farther realms where the faint light spent
Vanished at length from my firmament;
And I seek it in vain—Ah God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

On sleepless wing I have followed it
Through the star-sown fields of the Infinite;
And where foot of angel hath never trod
I have threaded the golden mazes of God;
I have pierced where the fire-fount of being runs,
I have dashed myself madly on burning suns,

Then downward have swept with shuddering breath
Through the place of the shadows and shapes of death,
Till sick with sorrow and spent with pain
I float and faint in the dim inane!
Must I yet wander? Ah God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

Oh could I find in uttermost space,
A place for hope, and for prayer a place,
Mine were no suit for a glittering prize
In the chosen seats of the upper skies—
No grand ministration, no thronèd height
In the midmost intense of unspeakable light.
What sun-god sphere with all-dazzling beam
Could be unto me as that sweet, sad gleam?
Let me roam through the ages all alone,
If He give me not back my own, my own!
How far must I wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

In the whispers that tremble from sphere to sphere,
Which the ear of a spirit alone can hear,
I have heard it breathed that there cometh a day
When tears from all eyes shall be wiped away,
When faintness of heart and drooping of wings
Shall be told as a tale of olden things,
When toil and trouble and all distress
Shall be lost in the round of Blessedness.
In that day when dividing of loves shall cease,
And all things draw near to the centre of peace,
In the fulness of time, in the ages afar,
God, oh God, shall I find my star?

NEW CHUM AND OLD MONARCH.

"Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir."

—CANNING.

"CHIEFTAIN, enter my verandah;
Sit not in the blinding glare;
Thou shalt have a refuge, and a
Remnant of my household fare.

"Ill becomes thy princely haunches
Such a seat upon the ground:
Doubtless, on a throne of branches
Thou hast sat, banana-crowned.

"By the brazen tablet gleaming
On the darkness of thy breast,
Which, unto all outward seeming,
Serves for trousers, coat, and vest;—

"By the words thereon engraven,
Of thy royal rank the gage,
Hail! true King, in all things save in
Unessential acreage.

"Such divinity doth hedge thee,
I had guessed thy rank with ease —
Such divinity—(but edge thee
Somewhat more to leeward, please.)

"Though thy lineage I know not,
Thou art to the manner born;
Every inch a king, although not
King of one square barleycorn.

"Enter, sire; no longer linger;
Cease thy signals grandly dumb;
Point not thus with royal finger
To thy hungry vacuum.

"Though thy pangs are multifarious,
Soon they all shall pass away:
Come, my begging Belisarius—
Belisorius, I should say.

"Fear not; I am the intruder;
I, and white men such as I:
Simpler though thou art, and ruder,
Thou art heir of earth and sky.

"Thine the mountain, thine the river,
Thine the endless miles of scrub:
Shall I grudge thee, then—oh never!—
Useless ends of refuse grub?

"Lay aside thy spears—(I doubt them);
Lay aside thy tomahawk;
I prefer thee, sire, without them,
By a somewhat longish chalk.

"Lay aside thy nullah-nullahs;
Is there war betwixt us two?
Soon the pipe of peace shall lull us—
Pipe a-piece, *bien entendu.*

"Seat thee in this canvas chair here;
Heed not thou the slumbering hound;
Fear not; all is on the square here,
Though thou strangely lookest round.

"Or if thou, my chair deriding,
Follow thine ancestral bent,
To the naked floor subsiding
Down the groove of precedent,—

"If the boards have more temptation,
Wherefore should I say thee No,
Seeing caudal induration
Must have set in long ago?

"Take thou now this refuse mince-meat;
Pick this bone, my regal guest:
Shall a fallen-warrior prince meet
Other welcome than the best?

"Treated like a very rebel,
Chased from town at set of sun,
Wert thou ev'n the debbil-debbil,
Thou shouldst eat—when I am done."

On the bare floor sat the sable
Chieftain of a fallen race,
Two black knees his only table,
"Wai-a-roo" his simple grace.

Stood I by and ruminated
On the chief's Decline and Fall,
While his highness masticated
What I gave him, bone and all.

"Chief," said I, when all had vanished,
"Fain am I thou shouldst relate
Why thou roam'st discrowned and banished
From thy scrub-palatinate."

Stared the chief, and wildly muttered,
As if words refused to come;
"Want him rum," at length he uttered;
"Black f'lo plenty like him rum!"

"Nay! 'Twill make thee mad—demoniac!
Set thee all a-fire within!
Law forbids thee rum and cognac,
Though in mercy, spares thy gin.

"Come; thy tale, if thou hast any."—
Forth the chieftain stretched his hand,
Stood erect, and shouted "Penny!"
In a voice of stern command.

"Out upon thee! savage squalid!
Mine ideal thus to crush,
With thy beggary gross and solid,
All for money and for lush!

"Out upon thee! prince degenerate!
Get thee to thy native scrub!
Die a dog's death!—or at any rate,
Trouble me no more for grub!

"At him, Ginger! Up and at him!
Go it, lad! On, Ginger, on!
King, indeed! the beggar! . . . Drat him!
One more fond illusion gone."

OFF THE TRACK.

OH where the deuce is the track, the track?
Round an' round, an' forrard, an' back!
"Keep the sun on yer right," they said—
But, hang it, he's gone an' got over my head!

"Make for a belt of apple trees;"—
Jist so. But where 's yer belt, if ye please?
By gum, it 's hot! This child 'll melt,
An' there ain't no apples, nor ain't no belt.

"Keep clear o' the timber-getters' tracks,"—
But wich is wich, I'd beg to ax?
They forks and jines, the devil knows how—
I wish I'd a sight o' either now!

"Leave the track," sez they, "when you sees
Some yards to the right two big grass trees."
Two! It's dozens on dozens I pass—
Most on 'em big, an' all on 'em grass.

Oh where the deuce is the track, the track?
I'm fairly taken aback, aback.
"Keep tow'rd the river. You can't go wrong."
Whew? Can't I, though! That was raythor strong.

"Follow the lay o' the land," sez they;
But, Lord, this flat ain't got no lay!
Whew! Ain't it hot on the pint o' the nose!
An' the more I mops the hotter I grows.

"An' when you comes to the foot o' the range"—
WHEN! That's the pint. But ain't it strange,
That the further I goes, to left or right,
The more there ain't no range in sight.

Gum trees, gum trees, slim an' high,
Timber green an' timber dry,
Blackened stumps an' fallen logs—
Lively work as on we jogs!

Oh the devil an' all take the flat, the flat!
I 'm one myself for the matter o' that.
I 'm mazed, an' so is the brute I rides,
An' the sun's getting over the left besides.

Dash it, I 'll follow my nose, my nose!
Step out, straight forrard, here goes, here goes!
Let the sun be left, or the sun be right,
Summat or other must come in sight.

* * * * * *

Well, well! If this ain't too bad by half!
Lor', how the beggars 'll laugh an' chaff!
Back to my startin' point? Yes; tis so.
I put up them slip-rails six hours ago.

THE HEADLESS TROOPER.

"NO; not another step, for all
The troopers out of hell!
I'll camp beside this swamp to-night,
Despite the yarns you tell.
I'm dead beat; that's a solid fact;
The other thing 's a sell."

And Ike gave in; good easy Ike;
Though now and then he stole
A glance across that dismal swamp,
Lugubriously droll;
'Twas plain that Headless Trooper lay
Heavily on his soul.

And, ere he slept, again he told
That tale of bloody men;
And how the Headless Trooper still
Rode nightly in the fen;
And then he slept, but in his sleep
He told it all again.

I cannot rest beside a man
Who mutters in his sleep;
It makes the chilly goose-flesh rise,
The epidermis creep—
('Tis no objection in a wife—
You get her secrets—cheap).

I put a hundred yards between
The muttering Ike and me:
I lay and thought of things that were,
And things that yet might be:
I could not sleep; I know not why;
My hair rose eerily.

I rose and sat me on a log,
And tried to keep me cool;
I thought of "Hume on Miracles,"
And called myself a fool;
But still the proverb racked my soul,
"Exceptions prove the rule."

The moon was full; the stars were out;
I tried to fix my eye
Where Night laid shining love-gifts
On the bosom of the sky;—
But well I knew that all the while
The Thing was standing by.

How tall this pine tree on my left!
How graceful in its height!
Its topmost branches seem to touch
The very brow of Night;—
But all the while I knew the Thing
Was panting at my right.

The 'possum leaves his hollow tree ;
The bandicoot is glad ;
It is the human heart alone
The still night maketh sad ;—
And all the while the Headless Thing
Was wheezing there like mad.

How ghostly is the mist that crawls
Along the swampy ground !
The Headless Thing here cleared its throat
With most unearthly sound !
And then I heard a gurgling voice,
But dared not glance around.

" They shot me ; Was it not enough !
Look, darn you ! Here 's the hole !
Was this not passage amply wide
For any human soul ?
But, no ! the blasted convict gang
Must likewise take my poll !"

I turned; looked up; and at the sight
My heart within me sunk:
'Twas new to me to find myself
In such a mortal funk;—
But newer still to fraternise
With a bifurcated trunk!

Above the neck no trooper was;
But formless void alone;
There physiognomy was *nil*,
Phrenology unknown;
Where head had been there but remained
The frustum of a cone!

Nay; I retract the "formless void;"
The case was otherwise;
For on the clotted marge there spun
A living globe of flies!
When one is dealing with the truth
One can't be too precise.

The loathsome whirling substitute
Buzzed in the vacant space,
And a thousand thousand little heads
Of one head took the place :—
And oh, the fly expression
Of that rotatory face !

The breast was bare ; the shirt thrown back
Exposed the wound to view :
The bullet in its course of death
Had cleared an avenue :—
Oh Gemini ! I saw the Twins
Distinctly shining through !
And those same Twins are shining still
To prove my story true.

In breeches, boots, and spurs arrayed
The nether Trooper stood ;

The soundless phantom of a horse
Grazed in his neighbourhood,—
At all events went through the form
Of hoisting in his food.

"What wouldst thou, Headless Trooper,
On the night's Plutonian shore?"
I took it from Poe's Raven
I had read not long before;
And I more than half expected
He would answer "Nevermore!"

But the Trooper only answered
By a perfect storm of sighs,
Which through his crater issuing,
Played Hades with the flies,—
As I have seen Vesuvius
Blow ashes to the skies

"Oh wherefore, Headless Trooper,
With the living intermix?
Since thou art dead, and hast no head,
Why kick against the pricks?
Why dost thou not, as others do,
Get clear across the Styx?"

The Trooper cleared his cone of flies,
And through his crater said,
"'Tis true I have no business here;
'Tis true that I am dead;
And yet I cannot cross the Styx—
They've fixed a fare '*per head!*'

"Fain would I cross as others do—
Fain would I pay my shot!
They only mock me when I ask
For leave to go to Pot!
How *can* I pay so much '*per head*'
When I no head have got?

"Yet what could I, thus headless, do
In that last Land of Nod?
It is not that the thing is dear,
So much as that it 's odd;—
They only charge an obolus,
A sort of Tommy Dodd.

"I've tried the ferryman with gold—
With every coin that goes;
He merely cries, 'Oh, go *a-head!*'
And, laughing, off he rows.
He can't twit me, at all events,
With paying through the nose!

"A drachma once I offered him,
Six times the fare in Greek;
He merely cursed my 'impudence,'
And pushed off in a pique:—
I didn't think a faceless man
Could be accused of cheek.

"From day to day, from night to night,
My prayer the wretch denies;
Yet even in this headless breast
Some grateful thoughts arise—
For though he's blasted all my hopes,
He cannot blast my eyes.

"I know not where the convict crew
My missing head consigned,
But I am doomed to walk the earth
Till that same head I find.
Oh, could I come across it
I would know it though I'm blind,—
The bump of amativeness sticks
So strongly out behind!

"The mouth extends from ear to ear;
The hair is fiery red;

Perchance it might attract thine eye
Who art not blind or dead;
I pray thee help me to obtain
My disembodied head!"

"Oh Headless Trooper, fain would I
With thee the search begin,
But ere the day I must away,
And trudge through thick and thin;
For I am bound to Stanthorpe town,
And time with me is tin.

"But ere upon my pilgrimage
With dawn's first streak I go,
I fain would do what in me lies
To mitigate thy woe.
If I can serve thee anywise,
I pray thee let me know."

The Trooper thought a little space,
His body forward bowed,
With plenteous sighs dispersed the flies,
And once more spoke aloud :—
"'Tis long since I have tried the weed;
I'd like to blow a cloud."

"How canst thou, headless man, who hast
No lips wherewith to puff?"
Here deprecatingly he waved
His hand, and said, "Enough.
Myself will guarantee the how,
If thou supply the stuff."

I took a meerschaum from my pouch,
A meerschaum clean and new,
As white as is undoctored milk,
As pure as morning dew :—
I pray you mark that it was white,
'Twill prove my story true.

I passed it to him, filled and lit,
Still wondering in my mind.
"Thanks, generous colonial,
Thou art very, very kind.
Now pick a thickish waddy up,
And plug my wound behind."

I picked a thickish waddy up,
And did as I was bid;
And right into the bullet-hole
The amber mouth he slid;
And then!—You never saw the like!
At least *I* never did.

Like a forge bellows went his chest,
And upward from his cone
There shot a vaporous spire, like that
From Cotopaxi blown.
The flies unglobed themselves, and fled
With angry monotone.

So fierce the blast, the pipe was void
Ere one might reckon ten;
And then with gesture wild he signed
To fill the bowl again;
The which I did, till he had smoked
Enough for fifty men.

Hour after hour he drew and blew,
Till twist began to fail,
Till all the sky grew dim with smoke,
And all the stars grew pale;
Till even the seasoned stomach turned
Of him who tells the tale.

The smoke mixed darkly with the mists
On the adjacent bogs,
And roused the hoarse remonstrant wail
Of semi-stifled frogs;
The 'possums all within a mile
Went home as sick as dogs.

But suddenly the phantom steed
Neighed with sepulchral sound,
And where both man and horse had been
Nor man nor horse was found!
I stood alone; the meerschaum lay
Before me on the ground.

The meerschaum lay upon the ground—
This much I may avouch;
I took it, and with trembling hand
Replaced it in my pouch;
And overcome with nausea
I sought my grassy couch.

The sun was up when I awoke,
And in his gladsome beams
I mocked the things of yesternight,
And laughed away my dreams:
Disciples of the School of Doubt
Are always in extremes.

But when I roused me from my couch
To take my morning smoke,
Like lightning flash the verity
Upon my laughter broke;—
The scarcity of 'baccy proved
The thing beyond a joke.

And when my pouch I opened next—
(Now check the wanton jeer)—
My pipe, my new, fresh meerschaum pipe—
('Tis true as I am here)—
My pipe was "*coloured!*" as if I
Had smoked it for a year!

My pipe was coloured!—no, not brown,
But black—as black as jet.
You don't believe it?—Man alive,
The pipe is coloured yet!
Look here—why here's the best of proofs—
The pipe, videlicet.

KING BILLY'S SKULL.

THE scene is the Southern Hemisphere;
The time—oh, any time of the year
Will do as well as another; say June,
Put it down likewise as the full of the Moon,
And midnight to boot, when churchyards, they say,
Yawn in a most unmannerly way;
And restless ghosts in winding-sheets
Go forth and jabber about the streets,
And rehearse old crimes that were better hid
In the darkness beneath the coffin-lid.
Observe, that I merely say, *on dit;*
But though it never happened to me
To encounter, either in-doors or out,
A posthumous gentleman walking about,

In regulation sepulchral guise,
Or in shirt, Crimean or otherwise,
Or in hat and boots and usual wear,
Or, save for a cloud, unbecomingly bare,
Or in gaseous form, with the stars shining through him,
Beckoning me to interview him—
On mission of solemnest import bound,
Or merely a constitutional round,
Beginning at twelve as books declare,
And ending at first sniff of morning air;—
Though all such things, you will understand,
Have reached me only at second-hand,
Or third, or fourth, as the case may be,
Yet there really did occur to me
Something which I perforce must call
Ultra-super-natural;—
In fact trans-ultra-super-preter-
Natural suits both truth and metre.

There is an Island, I won't say where,
For some yet live who mightn't care
To have the address too widely known;
Suffice it to say: South Temperate Zone.
In that same Isle thus precisely set down,
There's a certain township, and also a town—
(For, to ears colonial, I need not state
That the two do not always homologate).—
And in that same town there's a certain street;
And in that same street the *locale* to complete,
There's a certain Surgery, trim and neat,
Kept by——well, perhaps it were rash
To call him other than Doctor Dash.

At midnight, then, in the month of June
(And don't forget the full of the moon),
I sat in that Surgery, writhing with pain,
Having waited fully two hours in vain
For Doctor Dash, who, I understood,
Was engaged in the questionable good

Of adding one to the sum of woe
That includes all creatures here below,—
Especially those whose particular dolour,
As mine was then, is a rotten molar!

Have you noted that midnight's final stroke
Has a way of solemnising folk?
Though, goodness knows, in my special case
With a cheek that was quite a three-quarter face,
There needed no solemnising power,
No eerie vibration of midnight hour,
Chilling through heart, and thrilling through limb,
To put me *en rapport* with all things grim,
With all things dreary and dismal and dim,
The whole Night side of Nature (see Crow—not Jim).

Hardly was tolled the day's decease
From the ormolu clock on the mantelpiece,
When a running fire of perplexing knocks
Seemed to proceed from a rosewood box,

That stood on a table whereon were laid
The horrible tools of the surgical trade.
Somewhat slowly the notes began
With minims, and then into crotchets ran,—
From crotchets to quavers, then faster they grew,
Galloping, galloping, thirty-two
Beats to the semibreve—doubling once more
To a semibreve split into sixty-four,
Till failing to follow so rapid a rate,
I gave in at a hundred and twenty-eight.

I was scared, I confess, but the wish to know
Was stronger than terror of ghostly foe;
And stealthily, stealthily nearing the knocks,
I pressed my ear on the rosewood box,
And fancied I could discern beneath
The peculiar rattle of chattering teeth;
Which, as need hardly be said or penned,
Set each particular hair on end,

Froze all my young blood in a moment of time,
And curdled my bile, and my chyle, and my chyme!

But though terror undoubtedly gained the day,
Yet curiosity too had its way,
And the first had no sooner sung out Avaunt!
When the second cried Stay! what the deuce do you want?

Often as I have told the tale,
This particular part is so "like a whale,"
That I always feel an apology due
For insisting upon it as perfectly true.
This is what followed,—a grinding noise,
A friction of bones that grew to a voice;
And I heard these words (on my honour, I did),
"Hi! . . . Cooey! . . . You fella . . . Open 'im lid!"

Trembling all over from foot to head,
"How shall I open it, Spirit?" I said:—
"Lies there, oh lies there no key about?
For how can I open the coffer without?"

A kind of an audible ossified grin,
A gnashing of laughter, came from within,
And little by little I understood,
"You fella . . . . new chum . . . . You no good;
White fella . . . . crawler . . . . you no go,
Key in 'im lock . . . . my word . . . . 'tis so."

It was so indeed. I opened, and lo!
An afrit? A goblin? A bottle-imp? . . . . No;
Simply a Human Skull, enshrined
In rosewood, padded and velvet-lined,—
A low type of skull, as one could see
From the brutish depression where forehead should be;
Yet surely precious in some degree

To judge from the case, not to mention the key
And the lock by a well-known patentee.

All was still for three minutes at least;
Knocks and voices alike had ceased;
There lay the skull as silent and dumb
As Lot's wife's salted cranium.
Had it been all a gross mistake
In the frenzy begotten of molar-ache?
Was the whole affair but a fancy-freak,
Forged in the heat of a throbbing cheek?
Was it all—but rather than wait the event,
I determined to make the experiment.
So summoning courage a query to frame,
I boldly inquired, "You there, what name?"
Which, to supply explanation due,
Is the Lingua-Nigra for "Who are you?"

This is what followed—a grinding noise,
A friction of bones that grew to a voice;

And a slight elevation I certainly saw
Of the skull as if raised on the under jaw;
And this time beyond the chance of mistake,
My senses about me, and wide-awake,
No victim of frenzy, no fancy's gull,
I heard the words—"Me King Billy's Skull!"

Alas, poor Billy, I knew him well,
In his full corporeal *personnel*,
But a man might give his own father the go-by,
Were there only his brain-pan left to know by.
And this was Billy! the last of his race!
That sightless mask was his regal face!
How oft from the cavity within
Those fangs now set in ghastly grin,
Had I seen the curling smoke proceed
Of the eleemosynary weed—
A cavity even now displayed
Through a gap for his pipe expressly made!

Here, where the Kingly glance shot through,
Two eyeless sockets appal the view;
And where flourished the fibre of Cocoa-nut
Is an utterly towless occiput!—
But scant was the time to moralise,
For soon a light in the place of the eyes,
A wild looking, diabolical spark,
Like the eye of an angry cat in the dark,
Came and went, and went and came—
The spirit of Billy, perhaps, a flame:
And deeming it such, "What would you, pray?"
I asked in a stammering, tremulous way;
"What is your will, oh, William, say?
William, rex dei gratia!"

This is what followed,—a grinding noise,
A friction of bones that grew to a voice;
"You take me out . . . . go long o'street . . . .
You come place where three road meet . . . .

S'pos'n keep middle till come to bridge . . . .
Cross over creek, an' go up ridge . . . .
Up on 'im top lie down hollow tree . . . .
Lift up big sheet o' bark . . . . you see
Bones of brother belongin' to me . . . .
Take 'im up head . . . . put mine fella down . . . .
You fetch 'im brother head back to town . . . .
Put 'im in box . . . . lock 'im up like o' here . . . .
Dash no do *me!* . . . . my oath ! . . . . No fear !"

What COULD it all mean?—Three days ago
I had seen this monarch in earth laid low :
How had his fleshless skull returned
From the grave where I saw him so "quietly inurned?"
And what upon earth was the drift of the dark
Allusion to Dash in his closing remark?
And what could import a mission so strange—
This visit to death, this mysterious exchange?
And wherefore of all men should *I* be selected

To . . . . pending an answer I did as directed,
And in less than an hour the exchange was
effected.
King Billy supplanted, the box closed once more,
And myself fleeing forth from the surgery door!

Time and the hour, as Shakespeare says,
Run through the very roughest of days:—
(Forgive misquotation—the letter kills;
The spirit, at all events, is Will's)
Time and the hour having run their race,
I found myself back in the self-same place,
Dash standing by with a smiling face,
Wiping his weapon with dainty grace,
Myself no longer a surgical case,
But relieved (to the tune of twenty bob),
With the molar transferred to my trouser fob.
I could now look around me; the box was there,

Done up in canvas, and labelled "with care;"
And Dash, beholding my steadfast stare,
Said with Mephistophelian grin,
That looked like the very triumph of Sin,
"Bet you twenty to one in gold,
You never will guess what that box doth hold . . .
Not bet? . . . Well, listen while I unfold
A neat little tale of a neat little prank,
Played by myself upon Doctor Blank,
The Hospital Surgeon, who, as you know,
Is my open friend, but my secret foe.
Well, to begin *ab initio*,
King Billy whom we saw laid low
In his mother earth some days ago.
The last of the Aborigines,
Had long been dying of lung disease.
The melancholy fact was known
To Doctor Blank and myself alone,
And each of us watched with wary eye,
Patiently waiting till Billy should die."

(Here I ventured to ask him the reason why.)
"Why? Don't you see? this man, as the last
Of a great island race of the perished past—
(Save one old gin, from whom can be
No further scion, as all can see)
Is a wonderful curiosity:
And Blank and myself had sworn an oath,
Secret from each, yet known to both,
To achieve some scientific note
In catalogue or anecdote,
By the munificent presentation
Of King Billy's Skull to the British Nation!
Fancy the honour, the kudos, the fame!
A whole museum athrill with one's name.
Fancy the thousands all crowding to see
'Skull of the last Aborigine,
Presented by Asterisk Dash, M.D.'!!
A couple of men not sufficing to fix
The numbers on all the umbrellas and sticks,
And every voice in the eager crowd

Pronouncing the name of Dash aloud!
Fancy the honour, the kudos, the fame!
But fancy the everlasting shame,
If in place of Dash the name should be Blank!
The Quack! the Charlatan! Mountebank

"But to proceed. To daily view
Weaker and weaker His Majesty grew.
I tended him kindly, went out of my way
To see how he fared from day to day:
But all my kindness, in pill or potion,
Showed small by the side of Blank's devotion;
All my kindness in potion and pill
Only made Blank show kinder still.
Well, one dark day (which ill betide)
Returning home from a country ride,
I found, to my sore astonishment,
That Blank had had the patient sent
To the Hospital Nigger-ward—to die
Beneath my antagonist's very eye!

(Knew you ever such treachery!)—
I owe him one, to myself I said;
Let him have the body, I'll have the head,
By hook or by crook, let what will come—
By fair or by foul, I 'll have my thumb
On that potentate's caput mortuum!
I bribed a wardsman to let me know
When the patient should be *in articulo;*
And, accordingly, one afternoon I got
A letter to say King Billy was not.
I suddenly found I had been remiss
In my social duties to Blank, and this
Induced me to write him to give us to tea
The pleasure of his company.
Blank took the bait, came, found—not me,
But himself alone with Mrs. D.,
Who very much regretted to say
How the Doctor was suddenly called away,
Much, to be sure, against his will,
But Mrs. . . a . . Harris was very ill:—

In an hour or so he would return:—
Edith, tell Mary to bring the urn.

"Ere Blank sat down with my woman-kind,
I had slit Billy's head above and behind.
When Blank was requested to say a grace,
There was no skull behind Billy's face.
When Blank was just about to begin,
One skull was out and another skull in.
Ere Blank had buttered a morsel of toast,
The job was three-quarters through almost.
Ere Blank had sipped of his second cup,
The flesh was spliced, and the head tied up:
And before he had drunk it to the dregs,
I had done him, as sure as eggs are eggs!

"And he knows it too; but, all the same,
He hasn't blown it as yet for shame.

Let him publish it now as soon as he may,
He will find himself rather late in the day,
For this very night the treasure will be
Severed from Blank by leagues of sea.
Think of it, Sir, and congratulate me—
'Skull of the last Aborigine,
Presented by Asterisk Dash, M.D.'!!"

* * * *

In a certain Museum, I won't say where,
But it's not very far from Russell Square,
Should the gentle Reader e'er happen to see
"Skull of the last Aborigine,"—
And find, perchance, some poetical gull
Crooning the theme of a Monarch's skull,
Tell him to lay his theme on a shelf,
On peril of being a numskull himself;
Or to modulate his Parnassian whim
To the tune of "Brother belongin' to him."!!

MACAULAY'S NEW ZEALANDER.

IT little profits that, an idle man,
On this worn arch, in sight of wasted halls,
I mope, a solitary pelican,
And glower and glower for ever on Saint Paul's:—
Will no soft-hearted mortal be so very
Obliging as to row me o'er the ferry?

Here three-and-thirty years* I 've stood estranged,
A dream of ruin all around me stretching;
And centuries shall see me yet unchanged,
Ever in act to sketch, but nothing sketching;
Mutely immutable, constrain'dly still,
With nought to stand against, except my will.

* Macaulay's New Zealander dates from 1840.

A wondrous lot is mine; ye bide your doom
  Till men say Vixit: mine begins ere birth;
A lonely ghost projected from the womb
  Of Time-to-come, I linger now on earth.
Ye vertebrates date back, while I commence
My weary present in the future tense.

A weird eidolon; a born paradox;
  A fixture framed of incorporeal particles;
Yet dropped in many an Editorial box,
  Blown thence in squibs, or hurled in Leading
    Articles;
A Nomad, though my permanent address is
In Volume Second of Macaulay's Essays.

I was not born of woman (see Macduff—
  Nor stare to hear my lore so far extends;
The sire who bore me trafficked in such stuff,
  And had his Shakespeare at his finger-ends:

The quitch is in the blood—such blood as ghost has;
I know as much as he; at least, almost as).

I was not born of woman; gave no pain;
Through no preliminary stage did pass;
But sprang, a Pallas, from Macaulay's brain,
Though not, like her, with spear and helm of brass;
My spear, a pencil of Queensland plumbago;
My casque, a felt one—latest from Otago.

And therein lies the sting of all I bear—
That after brooding ages on mine arch,
And treasuring what the centuries prepare,
And noting what ye proudly term the March
Of Progress, and assimilating all
"The long result of Time," from Locksley-hall;—

That after seeing all that mortal can,
That after learning all that man can learn,

This forecast shade, already more than man,
Must go and be a baby in its turn!
I've got to go and be a little kid,
When old perhaps as Cheops' Pyramid!

I've got to wear a little purfled cap;
Pass through, perchance, some brutal mode of swaddling;
To gather tissue from a bowl of pap;
To undergo no end of molly-coddling;
To be brought up by hand, or, worse and worse,
To be a parasite upon a nurse.

And in due course this cultured soul of mine
Must learn its Catechism by easy stages;
And sundry rods shall yet be steeped in brine,
To stimulate the heir of all the ages;
And men shall file away with prose and rhyme
To sharpen *me*, the foremost file of time.

I pray you, purist, faint not at the word;
For in the distant day whereof I speak,
Your chastened phrases shall be held absurd;
What you call slang shall be our Attic Greek;
And every man be file, or bloke, or cove;
And bloods make oath by Gum, instead of Jove!

For standing here, immovable and dumb,
An arch-Stylites, birth, not death, awaiting,
Faint inklings reach me of the time to come,
Beneath the loud To-day reverberating;
And I could tell of things so strange and wild,
Your wisest don would feel himself a child;—

Could show up many a now-belauded quackery;
Could play the deuce with half your saints and sages
Could settle for you whether Boz or Thackeray
Shall be the admiration of the ages;
And whether Morris, Swinburne, and Rossetti
Shall number with the great, or with the petty;—

Could tell how empire shall have changed its place,
But must not "blow," *although* an Australasian;
Could tell you which shall be the ruling race,
But may not shock the orthodox Caucasian,
Nor dare your curiosity assuage,
Lest I should make half-castes become the rage;—

Could tell you quite a fairy tale of science,
And wonders in Political Economy,
That set your time-worn statutes at defiance,
And hold them out of date as Deuteronomy:
The darky, boss; the trashy white, a "brudder;"
Man at the prow, and woman at the rudder;—

How all shall go by natural selection;
No man allowed to live unless good-looking;
How love shall vent itself in vivisection,
And charms be rated subsequent to cooking;
How girls, instead of knitting sofa-covers,
Shall spend their leisure in tattooing lovers;

And how magnetic belts with dazzling hues
  Shall draw unwilling arms around the waist;
How damsels to enhance their lips shall use
  Odyllic force condensed into a paste;
And woo the bashful from his slow simplicity
With cakes of desiccated electricity;—

How education, as a general rule,
  Shall be conducted by familiar spirits;
How "circles" shall be formed in every school,
  And rappings shall reward superior merits;
And how the spectroscope, applied to spectres,
Shall re-enact all history, on reflectors;—

And how your vaunted patents and inventions
  Shall be for playthings to the great hereafter;
And all your philosophical pretensions
  Be themes of inextinguishable laughter;
Your engineering form for future times
The droll machinery of pantomimes.

Your steam—your boast! What is it but a vapour?
Or what more fleeting simile will do:
'Twill be effete as—let me see—what paper?
Eureka!—say, the "Saturday Review!"
Whose name, indeed, shall live—simply because
These lines give token such a paper *was*.

For there be those whose memory shall rot,
And pass, and be as it had never been;
Of such my famed progenitor's is not;
Valhalla holds him in the high serene:—
My Prospero! Oh may he prosper where he is,
Untouched by that unenviable caries!

For though I dumbly execrate the day
When first he chained me here, a lorn eidolon,
To be a literary popinjay,
And market-stock for every sucking Solon,
Be Hyperborean calm his long reward!
I'm proud of him; you know, he was a lord.

Mundanes, I say Good-bye, as on ye march;
I fain would shake your hands, but can't get at you,—
My prison-ruin waiting in the arch,
As in the marble waits the future statue.
I hate you, London-bridge! And if Saint Paul is
A name I loathe, the fault is Lord Macaulay's.

Witlings, a word: bring me no more to book;
And take not any more my name in vain;
Cast, if ye will, one final, loving look,
As upon one ye ne'er shall see again.
Behold me—let it be the last occasion—
Served up in verses for "The Australasian."

THE POWER OF SCIENCE.

"ALL thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,"
Are but the legacies of apes,
With interest on the same.

How oft in studious hours do I
Recall those moments, gone too soon,
When midway in the hall I stood,
Beside the Dichobune.

Through the Museum-windows played
The light on fossil, cast, and chart;
And she was there, my Gwendoline,
The mammal of my heart.

She leaned against the Glyptodon,
The monster of the sculptured tooth;
She looked a fossil specimen
Herself, to tell the truth.

She leaned against the Glyptodon;
She fixed her glasses on her nose;
One Pallas-foot drawn back displayed
The azure of her hose.

Few virtues had she of her own—
She borrowed them from time and space;
Her age was eocene, although
Post-tertiary her place.

The Irish Elk that near us stood,
(Megaceros Hibernicus),
Scarce dwarfed her; while I bowed beneath
Her stately overplus.

I prized her pre-diluvian height,
Her palæozoic date of birth,
For these to scientific eye
Had scientific worth.

She had some crotchets of her own,
My sweet viviparous Gwendoline;
She loved me best when I would sing
Her ape-descent and mine.

I raised a wild pansophic lay;
(The public fled the dismal tones);—
I struck a chord that suited well
That *entourage* of bones.

I sang the very dawn of life,
Cleared at a bound the infinite chasm
That sunders inorganic dust
From sly-born protoplasm.

I smote the stiffest chords of song,
I showed her in a glorious burst
How universal unity
Was dual from the first.

How primal germs contained in one
The beau-ideal and the belle;
And how the "mystery of life"
Is just a perfect cell.

I showed how sense itself began
In senseless gropings after sense;—
(She seemed to find it so herself,
Her gaze was so intense.)

And how the very need of light
Conceived, and visual organs bore;
Until an optic want evolved
The spectacles she wore.

How headless molluscs making head
Against the fashions of their line,
On pulpy maxims turned their backs,
And specialised a spine.

How landward longings seized on fish,
Fretted the type within their eggs,
And in amphibian issue dif-
Ferentiated legs.

I hopped the quaint marsupials,
And into higher mammals ran,
And through a subtle fugue I stole
From Lemurs up to Man.

How tails were lost—but when I reached
This saddest part of all my lay,
She dropped the corners of her mouth,
And turned her face away.

And proud to see my lofty love
So sweetly wince, so coyly shrink,
I woke a moving threnody—
I sang the missing link.

And when I spake of vanished kin,
Of Simian races dead and gone,
The wave of sorrow from her eyes
Half-drowned the Glyptodon.

I turned to other, brighter themes,
And glancing at our different scales,
I showed how lady beetles are
Robuster than the males.

I sang the Hymenoptera;
How insect-brides are sought and got;
How stridulation of the male
First hinted what was what.

And when—perchance too fervently—
I smote upon the chord of sex,
I saw the tardy spark of love
Blaze up behind her specs.

She listened with a heightened grace,
She blushed a blush like ruby wine,
Then bent her stately head, and clinked
Her spectacles on mine.

A mighty impulse rattled through
Her well-articulated frame;
And into one delighted ear
She breathed my Christian name.

And whispered that my song had given
Her secret thought substantial shape,
For she had long considered me
The offshoot of an ape.

She raised me from the enchanted floor,
And, as my lips her shoulder met,
Between two asthmas of embrace
She called me marmosette.

I strove to calm her down; she grew
Serener and serener;
And so I won my Gwendoline,
My vertebrate congener.

THE STORY OF A SOUL.

WHO can say "Thus far, no farther," to the tide
of his own nature?
Who can mould the spirit's fashion to the counsel
of his will?
Square his being by enactment—shape his soul to
legislature—
Be himself his law of living, his own art of good
and ill?

Who can sway the rhythm of breathing? Who can
time his own heart-beating?
Fix the pitch of all soul music, and imprison it in
bars?
Who can pledge the immaterial affinities from meeting?
Who can make him his own orbit unrelated to the
stars?

I had marked my path before me, not in flowery lane
or by-way,
Unbeguiled of all bird-singing, by no voice of waters
won;
And across life's silent glacier I had cut a clear cold
highway,
Little recking of the avalanche, or all-dissolving
sun.

I had said unto my soul, Be thou the lord of thine
own Reason;
Get thee face to face and heart to heart with
everlasting Truth;—
Thou art heir of all her beauty if thou dare the lofty
treason
To clasp her and to kiss her with the valiant lips of
youth.

Not in outer courts of worship, not by darkly-curtained
portal,
But within her inmost chamber, in the glory of her
shrine,
Shalt thou seek her and commune with her, a mortal
made immortal
By the breathing of her presence, by her fervid
hand in thine.

With no garment-clinging vassalage, unawed of all
tradition,
Alone, alone of mortals shalt thou gaze upon her
face;
And the years shall pass unheeded in the wonder of
the vision,
And her attributes unfolding make thee free of time
and space.

So I left the dewy levels, and with upward-pointing
finger
Marked my goal among the snowy peaks o'er
pleasure and o'er pain;
And the shining arms of Aphrodité beckoning me to
linger
By her side amid her rosy bowers were stretched
for me in vain.

And I heard the world pass by me with a far-off
dreamy cadence
Of an alien music uninformed with meaning to
mine ears;
And all sweet melodious laughter in the voice of men
and maidens
Come with distance-saddened undertone, a mockery
of tears.

Till alike the throb of pleasure and alike the great
o'erflowings
Of the springs of sorrow seemed to me forgotten
things of yore;
Till the world passed from beneath me, and the
rumour of its goings
Far diffused into the silent ethers reached my soul
no more.

And the bodiless and shadowless mute ghosts of
contemplation,
Charmed from spells of bookish lore were my
companions on my way;
And their flake-light footfalls cheered me to a dreamy
exaltation
Where the soul sat with the godheads, unassailable
as they.

I had lost the glow of Nature; and the pride of clearer seeing
Was to me for all elation, for the sunset and the flowers,
For the beauty and the music and the savour of all being,
For the starry thrills of midnight, for the joy of morning hours.

Down the slopes I left behind me fled the creeds of many races,
Fled the gnomes of superstition, fled rebuking fiends of fear,
And I smiled as I beheld them from the calm of my high places
Cast integument and substance, melt in mist and disappear.

So I held my way unwavering in dismal mountain-passes,
Though a voice within my soul was loud, in vain, and all in vain!
And I heard the unassuaging streams far down in deep crevasses,
And I stumbled snowblind 'mid the boulders of the long moraine.

Still I said, I will not falter, nor revisit earth for ever,
Who have breathed the breath of deity and lived Olympian hours!
——When the summer smote the glacier, and the ice became a river,
And I found me in the valley clinging wildly to the flowers!

Clinging wildly, clinging fondly, in a mad repentant fashion,
To the blossoms long forsaken, to the graces long foregone,
Paying lavishly in tears and sighs the long arrears of passion,
And re-wedded to the joy of earth by one fair thing thereon!

Fools and blind are we who think to soar beyond the reach of Nature!
Fools and blind who think to bid the tide of feeling from its flood!
Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?
Or compel the summer fervours from the solstice of the blood?

Not "as gods." Not yet. Our roots are in the earth
that heaves beneath me:
With her rhythm we move and tremble, with her
starry dance we whirl.
Lo, she laughs when I would fly to where her arms
shall not enwreath me,
Draws me back with chords of golden hair,
o'erthrows me with a girl!

What was I to deem it duty thus to sunder Truth
and Beauty—
Thus to die among the living, and to live among
the dead?
Ah, the hands of Truth are boonless, and the lips of
Truth are tuneless,
When we sever her from Love, and throne her
coldly overhead!

Now I know her drawing nearer in a fairer light and dearer
Than in wastes of icy solitude or page of weary tome—
In the gleam of golden tresses, in the eye that smiles and blesses,
In the glowing hand that presses Love's approved conviction home.

Truth is sphered in sweet communion. Truth is life and love in union.
Hand in hand from spiritual founts we catch the circling thrill.
We are not compact of reasons. There are changes in our seasons;
And the crescent orb of youth has many phases to fulfil.

QUART POT CREEK.

(*Australasian.*)

ON an evening ramble lately, as I wandered on sedately,
Linking curious fancies, modern, mediæval, and antique,—
Suddenly the sun descended, and a radiance ruby-splendid,
With the gleam of water blended, thrilled my sensitive physique,—
Thrilled me, filled me with emotion to the tips of my physique,
Fired my eye, and flushed my cheek.

Heeding not where I was going, I had wandered, all
unknowing,
Where a river gently flowing caught the radiant ruby-
streak;
And this new-found stream beguiling my sedateness
into smiling,
Set me classically styling it with Latin names and
Greek,
Names Idalian and Castalian such as lovers of the
Greek
Roll like quids within their cheek.

On its marge was many a burrow, many a mound,
and many a furrow,
Where the fossickers of fortune play at Nature's hide-
and-seek;
And instead of bridge to span it, there were stepping-
stones of granite,

And where'er the river ran, it seemed of hidden
wealth to speak.
Presently my soul grew stronger, and I, too, was fain
to speak :—
I assumed a pose plastique.

"Stream," said I, "I'll celebrate thee! Rhymes and
rhythms galore await thee!
In the weekly 'poet's corner' I'll a niche for thee
bespeak :
But to aid my lucubration, thou must tell thine
appellation,
Tell thy Naiad-designation—for the journal of next
week—
Give thy sweet Pactolian title to my poem of next
week.
Whisper, whisper it—in Greek!"

But the river gave no token, and the name remained
unspoken,
Though I kept apostrophising till my voice became
a shriek;—
When there hove in sight the figure of a homeward
veering digger,
Looming big, and looming bigger, and ejecting clouds
of reek—
In fuliginous advance emitting clouds of noisome
reek
From a tube beneath his beak.

"Neighbour mine," said I, "and miner,"—here I
showed a silver shiner—
"For a moment, and for sixpence, take thy pipe from
out thy cheek.
This the guerdon of thy fame is; very cheap indeed
the same is;

Tell me only what the name is—('tis the stream
whereof I speak)—
Name the Naiad-name Pactolian! Digger, I adjure
thee, speak!"
Quoth the digger, "Quart Pot Creek."

Oh, Pol! Edepol! Mecastor! Oh most luckless
poetaster!
I went home a trifle faster, in a twitter of a pique;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living rhyming
being
Ever yet was cursed with seeing, in his poem for the
week,
Brook or river made immortal in his poem for the
week,
With such name as "Quart Pot Creek!"

* * * * * *

But the river, never minding, still is winding, still is winding,
By the gardens where the Mongol tends the cabbage and the leek;
And the ruby radiance nightly touches it with farewell lightly,
But the name sticks to it tightly,—and this sensitive physique,
The already-mentioned (vide supra) sensitive physique,
Shudders still at "Quart Pot Creek!"

"OUR HOPE."

[Mackay, November 20.—Captain O'Dwyer, of the "Morning Light," reports finding, yesterday, seven miles south of Cape Palmerston, a boat of about six tons, evidently built from materials of a large ship. The words "Our Hope" were painted on bows and stern, and carpenters' tools, provisions, and patent log were found in her. The boat is not much damaged, and is canvassed over and partly coppered. No traces of names of crew or human remains were found, and the boat appears to have only been beached a short time.—*Courier* telegram, November 21.]

A WIND-BORNE shred of that mysterious scroll
Wherein the secrets of the deep are writ:
An echo of the warfare of the soul:
A stranded hope; "Our Hope"—so runneth it.

So runneth it; a tale of manful aim,
Of clinging trust, of hope that would not die,
Shrunk to the piteous legend of a name,
That lingers in baptismal mockery.

"Our Hope!" Poor chronicle unsouled of sense!
Drear ghost of shattered hope!—but potent yet
With wail of sea-sepulchral eloquence
To wake conjecture, and confirm regret!

Brief words and few; but needs no more to tell
Of hope from shipwrecked hope through toil renewed;
And how from some lone isle with glad farewell
THEY launched upon the awful solitude.

How day by day they stared at ocean's rim
With straining eyes, for sail, or cliff, or tree,
Till all things paled, and ev'n "Our Hope" grew dim,
And dark-winged night came brooding o'er the sea.

Or how beneath a fateful sky o'ercast,
'Mid panting silence of deceitful calms,
The long sore shrift of prayerful vigils passed,
With heaven-turned faces and uplifted palms.

Or how, when quivering up the orient slope
Of dawn, the opal splendors thrilled and spread,
Glad in the joy of hope renewed, "Our Hope"
With homeward throb across the waters fled.

How day brought night, and night reluctant morn,
Till hope deferred became a wild despair,
And shoreless sunsets laughed their dreams to scorn,
And Doom hung lurid on the burdened air.

How one by one, no more by hope beguiled,
Fed the hot winds with taint of dying breath,
Until the last lone lingerer, fever-wild,
Arraigning Heav'n, leaped madly into death.

Is this the last of hope?—An empty shell
The bitter end of many a toil-drawn sigh?
"Why make we such ado?" Were it not well
To fold our robes about us, and to die?

To build—put forth—and cease: Is this our tale?
Shall baffled effort mock us evermore?
Come forth, oh brighter Faith, with golden sail,
And bring us tidings from the further shore!

Shine forth, oh Faith, from out the viewless scope
Of rich fulfilment far o'er mortal dreams!
Shine forth with joyous tidings of "Our Hope"
Home-haven'd by the marge of crystal streams!

FROM AN UPPER VERANDAH.

WHAT happier haunt could the gods allot
For loftiest musing to sage or bard?—
Yet I would that this upper verandah did *not*
Look down on my beautiful Neighbour's Back-yard!

I stir the afflatus: Descend, oh ye Nine!
Let the crystalline gates of the soul be unbarred!
No. My thoughts *will* keep running in one fixed line—
The clothes-line that hangs in my Neighbour's Back-yard!

Let me gaze on the hills; let me think of the sea;
Of the dawn rosy-fingered—the night silver-starred:—
(What dear little feet must the owner's be
Of those stockings that hang in my Neighbour's Back-yard!)

Let me tune my soul to a measure devout:—
Ah, the musical mood is all jangled and jarred,
While things with borders, and things without,
Keep flutt'ring down there in my Neighbour's Back-yard!

Are the True and the Good and the Beautiful dead,
That I win not one gleam of Pierian regard?
(Does she suffer, I wonder, from cold in the head?—
Such a lot of *mouchoirs* in my Neighbour's Back-yard!)

Comes the fit. While it sways me, high themes would
I sing!
Prometheus! Achilles! Have at you! *En garde!*
Alexander the Great—(oh that *I* were a string
On that apron hung out in my Neighbour's Back-
yard!)

I will shut my eyes fast—I have hit it at last,
Now my purest Ideals flit by me unmarred;
And odors of memory rise from the past,
(And an odor of suds from my Neighbour's Back-
yard!)

Ah, yes, when the eyelids together are prest,
Every vestige of earth we throw off and discard.
(These are flannels, I think. Is she weak in the
chest?—
There! I'm looking again at my Neighbour's
Back-yard!)

Since the Muses back out, let Philosophy in:
Let me ponder its problems cold and hard.
Ah, Philosophy dies in a celibate grin
At that bolster-case down in my Neighbour's Back-yard!

Oh shame on my rapidly silvering hairs!
Oh shame on this veteran battered and scarred!
I to be witched with these frilled—affairs!
Confound my neighbour! Confound her Back-yard!

Why seek for the blossoms of Auld Lang Syne,
When the boughs where they budded are blasted and charred?—
Faugh! the whole concern's too alkaline—
It's washing day in my Neighbour's Back-yard.

OPENING HYMN.

[Sung at the Opening of the Queensland National Society's Exhibition, 1876.]

WHILE nations joining gifts
Their fanes of Art adorn,
Hear, Lord, the lowly voice that lifts
The song of the youngest-born.
The gifts of the youngest-born,
We spread them forth to Thee,—
What toil hath wrought, what skill hath taught,
What Freedom hath brought the free.

No storied name we vaunt,
Nor martial trophies raise;
No battle-riven banners flaunt
The triumphs of other days.
But triumphs of peaceful days
Adorn our jubilee:
Here toil and skill Thine ends fulfil,
With hands that from blood are free.

We pile the arms of Peace,
Her trophies manifold,
Her ploughshare swords, her shields of fleece,
Her armour of bloodless gold.
Our treasures of fleece and gold
We consecrate to Thee,
With choicest yield of fruitful field,
And spoil from the forest-tree.

We bless Thee for our land,
Broad streams and gladdening rills,
For flocks that roam on ev'ry hand,
For herds on a thousand hills.
From all its thousand hills
Our land doth call to Thee,
Still do Thou bless with happiness
This youngest of the free.

ANTHEM FOR QUEENSLAND.

MAKER of Earth and Sea,
What shall we render Thee?
All ours is Thine:—
All that our land doth hold,
Increase of field and fold,
Rich ores and virgin gold,
Thine—Thine—all Thine!

What can Thy children bring?
What save the voice to sing
"All things are Thine?"—

What to Thy throne convey?
What save the voice to pray
"God bless our land alway,
This land of Thine?"

Oh with Thy mighty hand
Guard Thou the Motherland;
She, too, is Thine.
Lead her where honor lies,
We beneath other skies
Still clinging daughterwise,
Hers, yet all Thine.

Britons of ev'ry creed,
Teuton and Celt agreed,
Let us be Thine.
One in all noble fame,
Still be our path the same,
Onward in Freedom's name,
Upward in Thine!

THE DOMINION OF AUSTRALIA.

[A Forecast.]

SHE is not yet; but he whose ear
Thrills to that finer atmosphere
Where footfalls of appointed things,
Reverberant of days to be,
Are heard in forecast echoings,
Like wave-beats from a viewless sea—
Hears in the voiceful tremors of the sky
Auroral heralds whispering, "She is nigh."

She is not yet; but he whose sight
Foreknows the advent of the light,
Whose soul to morning radiance turns
Ere night her curtain hath withdrawn,
And in its quivering folds discerns
The mute monitions of the dawn,
With urgent sense strained onward to descry
Her distant tokens, starts to find Her nigh.

Not yet her day. How long "not yet"? . . .
There comes the flush of violet!
And heavenward faces, all aflame
With sanguine imminence of morn,
Wait but the sun-kiss to proclaim
The Day of The Dominion born.
Prelusive baptism!—ere the natal hour
Named with the name and prophecy of power.

Already here to hearts intense,
A spirit-force, transcending sense,
In heights unscaled, in deeps unstirred,
Beneath the calm, above the storm,
She waits the incorporating word
To bid her tremble into form.
Already, like divining-rods, men's souls
Bend down to where the unseen river rolls;—

For even as, from sight concealed,
By never flush of dawn revealed,
Nor e'er illumed by golden noon,
Nor sunset-streaked with crimson bar,
Nor silver-spanned by wake of moon,
Nor visited of any star,
Beneath these lands a river waits to bless
(So men divine) our utmost wilderness,—

Rolls dark, but yet shall know our skies,
Soon as the wisdom of the wise
Conspires with nature to disclose
The blessing prisoned and unseen,
Till round our lessening wastes there glows
A perfect zone of broadening green,—
Till all our land Australia Felix called,
Become one Continent-Isle of Emerald;—

So flows beneath our good and ill
A viewless stream of Common Will,
A gathering force, a present might,
That from its silent depths of gloom
At Wisdom's voice shall leap to light,
And hide our barren feuds in bloom,
Till, all our sundering lines with love o'ergrown,
Our bounds shall be the girdling seas alone.

NONSUITED.

"DEAR Richard, come at once;"—so ran her
letter;
The letter of a married female friend:
"She likes you both, and really knows no better
Than I myself do, how her choice will end.
Be sure of this, the first who pops will get her.
He's here for Chris—." Whatever else was penned
Dick never knew: nor knows he to this day
How he got drest, and mounted—and away!

Like arrow from the bow, like lightning-streak,
Including thunder following fierce and quick,
By ridge and flat, through scrub and foaming creek
Dick galloped like a very lunatic;
Whipped, jerked, and spurred, but never word did speak,
Although his thoughts rushed furious and thick,
Headed by one he strove in vain to wipe out,
The fear that this same "he" might put his pipe out.

And faster yet, and ever faster grew
The maddening music of the pace, until
The station-roofs gleamed suddenly in view,
Quivering in noon-heat on the vine-clad hill:
When all at once his bridle-rein he drew,
But not from craven fear or flagging will,—
Though, truth to tell, his heart a moment sank
To see the river nearly "bank and bank."

For Bowstring was the choice of all his stud,
And *he* at least had no fair bride to win;
And wherefore should he risk *him* in the flood?—
A question Bowstring also asked within:
For though he was a squatter's horse by blood,
And held the grazing interest more than kin,
He eyed the huge logs wheeling, bobbing, bowling,
As if his soul objected to "log-rolling."

And by that curious telegraphic force,
Outspeaking half-a-dozen formal speeches,
That works its quick inexplicable course
Through saddle-cloth, pigskin, and buckskin breeches,
Until the dumb opinion of a horse
Its sympathetic rider's spirit reaches—
Dick, feeling under him the strong flanks quiver,
Knew that his thorough-bred would funk the river.

A moment more, Dick from his seat had leapt,
  Ungirthed, uncurbed, unreined his trembling steed;
Who straightway vanished from his sight, nor kept
  The high tradition of a loyal breed,
But quickened by no stimulus except
  His own unbridled (and unsaddled) greed,
Before a man had time to reckon two,
Was gorging in fresh fields and pastures new.

Then Dick threw off his boots, undid his belt,
  Doffed—here we shirk particulars. In brief,
When nought remained but his primeval pelt,
  He tied his garments in his handkerchief;
Then feeling as "the grand old gardener" felt
  (After the apple), crouching like a thief,
Down to the stream did this lorn lover slink,
And threw his bundle to the further brink.

Nor longer paused, but plunged him in the tide,
A hero and Leander both in one;
Struck the entangling boughs from either side,
And held his head up bravely to the sun;
Dodged the huge logs, the torrent's strength defied;—
To cut it short, did all that could be done;
Touched land, and uttering a fervent "Thank * * * *.'
—Just then his bundle floated by, and sank.

Take Yarra bend, take Bedlam, Colney Hatch,
And Woogaroo, and mix them weight for weight,
And stir them well about—you could not match
Dick's madness with the whole conglomerate.
If the Recording Angel did but catch
One half his ravings against Heaven and Fate,
And rising creeks and slippery banks, some day
Poor Dick will have a heavy bill to pay.

Was ever lover in so lorn a case?
  Was ever lover in so wild a mood?
He nearly pulled the beard from off his face;
  He would have rent his garments, *if he could.*
How could he woo a dame his suit to grace,
  Who had *no* suit, save that wherein he stood?
Oh what were youth, wealth, station in society,
Without the textile adjuncts of propriety!

When oaths and half-an-hour were spent in vain,
  It dawned on Dick that he might slyly crawl
From tree to tree across the wooded plain,
  And gain "the hut," that stood a mile from all
The other buildings—whence some labouring swain,
  Unscared by nudity, might come at call,
And lend, for thanks, or promissory payment,
Whatever he could spare of decent raiment.

From one variety of Eucalypt
Unto another, blue gum, spotted gum,
Black-butt, etcetera, Dick crawled or skipped,
Bitten and blistered like the newest chum;
Till, marking where the open level dipped,
Distracted with mosquito-martyrdom,
He rushed, and plunged—and not a bit too soon—
Into the coolness of a quiet lagoon.

No, not a bit too soon; for something white,
Topped by a parasol of lustrous pink,
At this same perilous moment hove in sight,
And glided gently to the water-brink;
The while in thickest sedge the rueful wight
Hid his diminished head, and scarce dared wink,—
No more a gallant daringly erotic,
But consciously absurd, and idiotic.

'Twas she; his love;—and never had he thought
Her face so beautiful, her form so stately;
Ophelia-like she moved, absorbed, distraught;
'Twas plain to Dick she had been weeping lately;
And now and then a weary sigh he caught,
And once a whisper that disturbed him greatly,
Which said, unless his ears played him a trick,
"What in the world can have come over Dick!"

And presently, through his aquatic screen,
His hated rival he beheld advance,
With airy grace and captivating mien,
And all the victor in his countenance:
And too, too late he learned what *might have been,*
When at her watch he saw the lady glance,
And heard her say, "Here's Fred. The die is cast!
I gave poor Dick till two; 'tis now half-past."

And then Dick closed his eyes, his ears he stopped;
Yet somehow saw and heard no whit the less,—
Saw that the lover on his knees had dropped,
And heard him all his tale of love confess;
And when the question had been duly popped,
He heard the kiss that sealed the answering
"Yes!"—
'Twas rough on Dick: ah me! 'twas mighty rough:
But he remained true blue (though all in buff),—

And never winced, nor uttered word or groan,
But gazed upon the treasure he had lost,
In agony of soul, yet still as stone,
The saddest man since first true love was crossed:
And when at length the mated birds had flown,
He waited yet another hour, then tossed
His modesty unto the winds, and ran
Right for the hut, and found—thank Heaven—a man.

* * * * * *

On that same evening, in his rival's coat,
Waistcoat and things, Dick sat among the rest;
And though he could have cut their owner's throat,
He kept his feelings underneath his vest,
And proved by some mendacious anecdote
That he was there by chance—a passing guest.
One boon at least stern Fate could not refuse;
He stood that evening *in his rival's shoes.*

THE COURTSHIP OF THE FUTURE.

[A PREVISION.]

(A. D. 2876.)

HE

"WHAT is a Kiss?"—Why long ago
When pairs, as we, a-wooing sat,
They used to put their four lips . . . . so . . . .
And make a chirping noise . . . . like that.
And strange to say, the fools were pleased;
A little went a long way then:
A cheek lip-grazed, a finger squeezed,
Was rapture to those ancient men.

Ah not for us the timid course
  Of those old-fashioned bill-and-cooers!
One unit of *our* psychic force
  Had squelched a thousand antique wooers.
For us the god his chalice dips
  In fountains fiercer, deeper, dearer,
Than purling confluence of lips
  That meet, but bring the Souls no nearer.

Well; 'twas but poverty at worst:
  Poor beggars, how could they be choosers!
Not yet upon the world had burst
  Our Patent Mutual Blood-Transfusers.
Not yet had Science caught the clue
  To joy self-doubling, -squaring, -cubing,—
Nor taught to draw the whole soul through
  A foot of gutta-percha tubing.

Come, Lulu, bare the pearly arm ;—
  Now, where the subtle blue shows keenest,
I hang the duplex snake-like charm,
  (The latest, by a new machinist).
And see, in turn above my wrist
  I fix the blood-compelling conduits . . .
Ah, this is what the old world missed,
  For all the lore of all its pundits !

I turn the tap—I touch the spring—
  Hush, Lulu, hush ! our lives are blending.
(This new escapement's quite the thing,
  And very well worth recommending).
Oh circuit of commingling bliss !
  Oh bliss of mingling circulation !
True love alone can merge like this
  In one continuous pulsation.

Your swift life thrills me through and through;
I wouldn't call the Queen my mother:
Now you are I, and I am you,
And each of us is one another.
Reciprocally influent
The wedded love-tide flows between us :—
Ah, this is what the old fables meant,
For surely, love, our love is venous.

Now, now, your inmost life I know,
How nobler far than mine and grander;
For through *my* breast *your* feelings flow,
And through my brain your thoughts meander.
I feel a rush of high desires
With sweet domestic uses blending,
As now I think of angel-choirs,
And now of stockings heaped for mending.

And see—myself! in light enshrined!
An aureole my hat replacing!
Now, amorous yearnings half-defined,
With prudish scruples interlacing.
Next, cloudlike floats a snowy veil,
And—heavens above us!—what a trousseau! . .
Come, Lulu, give me tale for tale;
I'll keep transfusing till you do so.

SHE.

Oh, love, this never *can* be you!
The stream flows turbid, melancholic;
And heavy vapours dull me through,
Dashed with a something alcoholic.
The elective-forces shrink apart,
No answering raptures thrill and quicken;
Strange feelings curdle at my heart,
And in my veins vile memories thicken.

I feel an alien life in mine!
It isn't I! It isn't you, Sir!
This is the mood of Caroline!
Oh, don't tell *me!* I know the brew, Sir!
Nay, nay,—it isn't "the machine"!
This isn't you—this isn't I, Sir!
It's the old story—you have been
Transfusing elsewhere on the sly, Sir.

ON A FORK OF BYRON'S.

[One of a set in the possession of C. W. Pitts, Esq., Stanthorpe.]

LIKE any other fork.—No mark you meet with
To point some psychological conceit with.
An ordinary fork. A fork to eat with.

No individuality of fashion:
No stamp of frenzy fine, or poet-passion:
An article in no respect Parnassian.

No muse "with ivy never sere" hath decked it:
In fact, it would be foolish to expect it.
I question if the muses recollect it.

A plain straightforward fork; yet interesting,
As to the world in general attesting
That poetising hinges on digesting.

A fork not standing on its merits merely,
But, being Byron's, testifying clearly
That verse and victuals are related nearly.

Quite genuine; crest and all; a fork to swear by:
Some poet-stories doubtless hanging thereby,—
Associations such as gold can ne'er buy.

For 'twixt the fork and the divine afflatus
The links are perfect; there is no hiatus;
Fork, stomach, brain, pen,—all one apparatus.

So when the food that on the fork ascended
Grew into verse as with the brain it blended,
The fork wrote just as truly as the pen did.

For though the fork the earlier resource is,
Between the two no violent divorce is,—
I hold them to be correlated forces.

Perchance the unsuspected ministration
Of this same fork first set in circulation
The coinage of his rich imagination.

Perchance this very fork could give the clue to
What many of the famous thoughts were due to,
That now are part of me, and part of you too.

And if its prongs administered the fuel
That working duly unto brain-renewal
Kindled the thoughts that even yet fire *you* all,—

This very fork,—(unless I quite astray be,
And you of unimpressionable clay be),—
A factor in *your* moral product may be.

And musing thus, does not this fork begin to you
To seem as consanguineously akin to you
As if the bard himself had stuck it into you?

'Tis ever thus: what Genius consecrateth
The nearest with the most remote collateth,
Till meanest use on highest issue waiteth.

This salad, now, in which the fork I'm pressing,
Wherein are all sweet savours coalescing—
What subtle shoot of genius efflorescing
Flowered in the flavor of so rich a blessing?
Is it that Byron's fork, some charm possessing,
Transmutes the—stop a bit.—Who did the dressing?

CAPE BYRON.

UPON the orient utmost of the land,
Enfranchised of the world, alone, and free,
I stood; before me, and on either hand,
The interminable solace of the sea.

A white-winged hour of heaven, a fugitive
Of which the angels wist not, hither fled,
Whose plumy, rustling whispers bid me live
Its length of moments as if grief were dead.

Oh memorable hour of beauteous things!
The heaving azure melting into light;
The chequered sport of fleet o'ershadowings;
The nearer emerald curling into white;

The shoreward billows merging each in each,
To sunder yet again, fold, and unfold;
The shining curve of far-receptive beach;
The silvery wave-kiss on the gladdened gold;

The grandeur of the lone old promontory;
The distant bourne of hills in purple guise,
Athrob with soft enchantment; high in glory
The peak of Warning bosomed in the skies!

Oh all too fair to be so seldom seen,
This shadowy purple on the mountains sleeping—
This sapphire of unutterable sheen—
This beauty-harvest ever ripe for reaping!

For what high end is all this daily boon,
Unseen of man, in sightless silence spent?
Doth lavish Nature vainly importune
The unconscious witness of the firmament?

Or is it that the influent God, whose breath
Informs with glory sea and shore and hill,
His infinite lone rejoicing nourisheth
Upon the beauteous outcome of His will?

Or is it but a patient waiting-while
Against a day when many an eye shall bless,
From lowly cottage and imperial pile,
This wide tranquillity of loveliness;—

Against a day of many-thronging feet,
Of virtues, valours, all that builds and saves—
Of human loves responsive to the sweet
Melodious importunity of waves?

I only know that this empurpled range,
This golden shore, this great transcendent sea,
Are now a memory that will not change
Till I become as they—a memory.

FOR MY SAKE.

[Written in aid of the Children's Hospital.]

MATTHEW xxv. 40.

"INASMUCH as ye gave ear unto the sighing
Of the least of these the children of my care,—
Of your love from death redeemed them, or in dying
Stood between them and the shadow of despair;—

"Inasmuch as when the little ones did languish,
Ye put forth the hand to make their burdens light;—
Inasmuch as when they lay on beds of anguish,
Ye were with them in the watches of the night;—

"All the joy ye brought to light when sorrow hid it
Now awaits you, an exceeding great reward.
As ye did it unto these, to ME ye did it;
Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

"Lord, when sought we out the children that did languish?
When put forth the hand to make their burdens light?
Lord, we wist not when they lay on beds of anguish,
And we slept throughout the watches of the night.

"For our lives were full of trouble and of labour,
And the night followed hard upon the day:
Had we lingered with the children of our neighbour,
Our own little ones had perished by the way."

"Inasmuch as though ye might not touch or tend them,
Ye were with them in your love, to heal and save,—
And were hands and feet to those who did befriend them,
By the gold and by the silver that ye gave,—

"Find your treasure where your ransomed ones have hid it;
Take it back a thousandfold for your reward.
As ye did it unto these, to ME ye did it;
Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

THE BOY CRUSADER.

"OH father, is that Jerusalem—
Those walls and towers so strong?"
"Ho, boy, we are yet in our own fair France,
That is only Avignon."

* * * * * *

"Oh father, are these the Jordan's banks?
Let us rest in those vineyards fair."
"Ho, boy, these are only the banks of the Rhone,
And we may not linger there."

* * * * * *

"Oh father, I fear them—the waves! the waves!
Is Jerusalem over the sea?"
"Ay, over the sea and then over the hills—
But cling, my boy, to me."

* * * * * *

"Oh father, is that Jerusalem,
Like a shell of gold in the bay?"
"Nay, it is only Palermo, boy;
And this is Saint Rosalie's day."

* * * * * *

"Oh father, I feared the sea, but more
I fear this burning sand."
"Good cheer, my boy; take heart of grace;
We tread upon Holy Land."

* * * * * *

"Oh father, can it be Holy Land,
With all this blood and death?"
"That was Acre we stormed, my boy;
Now let us to Nazareth."

* * * * * *

"Oh father, the hills are so high—so high!
Is Jerusalem very far?"
"Hush, hush, my boy, and I'll tell you the tale
Of the Kings who followed the Star."

"Oh father, the hills are so steep—so steep!
Will Jerusalem soon be near?"
"Boy, what had it been had you carried the cross,
Instead of your father's spear!"

* * * * * *

"Oh father, I am weary and faint.
This must be Calvary!"
"Good cheer, my boy; but one hill more:
Jerusalem is nigh.

"The men-at-arms have passed the ridge.
Hark, boy, how the warriors sing!"
"I only hear the sound of harps,
And waters murmuring."

"Wake, boy, this is no time to fail!
Oh best of happy hours!
Behold at length Jerusalem—
Its gates, and domes, and towers!"

"Father, I see Jerusalem,
Ah, nearer than you deem!"
"Your eyes are closed, you see it not,
Or see it in a dream!

"Your eyes are closed, my boy, my boy!
Your face is to the West!"
"Father, I see it overhead,
And, oh, so full of rest!

"There are little children clothed in white,
And angels leading them:
There are streets of gold and gates of pearl!
At last—Jerusalem!

"And our little Marie is beckoning me,
In her hand a diadem.
Father, I must go on before:
We'll meet in Jerusalem."

THE GOTHS IN CAMPANIA.

[PLACIDIA, IN THE TENT OF ADOLPHUS.]

I.

I AM not Roman when he looks upon me
With those mild eyes of unaccustomed blue;
Woman, not Roman, when his strong embraces
Crush me with rugged promises of love.
Time was, ere yet the Gothic trump had broken
The dream of that inviolate majesty
Whose very sleep was empire—Rome its pillow—
Its couch, the world—its overhanging, heaven;

Time was, when only words of courtly homage
Brought to mine ear the import of such praise
As had bestirred Divinity to wonder
That men should deem it of so high account;
When careful speech of long premeditation
Lost grace and aptitude in present awe;
When lips, late ruddy with the blood of Cæsars,
Grew white in rash petition for such boons
As gods had smiled at—unrewarding favour,
A word, a look, yea, even indifference,
As if in me the fear of adverse fortune
Had recognised some godhead of caprice.
But when the sun shone in the palace-garden,
And May was in the roses and in me,
And all my soul cried out for what it had not,
To crown the life of summer and my own,
Honorius' sister, Theodosius' daughter,
Placidia, I, of Roman maidens first,
Had welcomed fellowship and clasped intrusion;—
Yet no man asked my heart, no man my love.

None to the longing of my life made answer;
None broke the still Imperial solitude
With sweet audacity of hardy wooing;
None wronged the princess by the woman's right.
Such time had been, until this bold Adolphus
With warrior-laugh o'erleaped prerogative,
And caught me for a spoil beneath his buckler,
The princess captive, but the woman free.
A dreary code of law inscribed in purple
Had been the record of Placidia's years,
But that this Goth from out the Boreal lustre
Of his blue eye shed heav'n upon the page,
And wrote in crimson characters of triumph
The story of a glad captivity.
For in restraint of foot I leaped to rescue
From golden chains and regal servitude;
And this my durance is a fond redemption
That makes me free to love, and to be loved.

II.

Yet there are moments, when as now he slumbers
Beside my feet, 'mid these disorder'd spoils
That make my prison-tent a Roman ruin—
Fierce moments of resurgent memory,
Full of rebuke of race and name forsaken,
And peopled with the spirits of the past.
Oh, it doth wrench me when his heedless fingers,
Circling the chalice in Faternian dreams—
The golden chalice that my father drank of,
Enriched with his own emblems, priceless work,
Gazing whereon his well-instructed spirit
Enhanced the vintage with the pride of art—
Relax and glide adown the rare embossment,
Until they touch that laurelled head, whose nod,
More than of Jove, shook not Olympus only,
But Jove himself, and all his kindred gods.

Then daughter, sister, princess, rise within me,
A trinity abhorrent of itself—
That other self, which, when Adolphus sleepeth,
Sleeps, and, when he awaketh, wakes to him.

III.

Why should the spirit of my father vex me?
Or what allegiance owe I unto him
Who dwells apart, inglorious in Ravenna,
And could not, if he would, renew my state?
I see them not, and wherefore should I deem me
So much beholden to the unbeheld?
I hear them not; shall I be answerable
To irresponsive death and voiceless sloth?
They touch me not; can unembracing shadow
With close assurance compass me about?
Nor eye, nor ear, nor any sense declares them,
Unseen, unechoing, uncomforting:

But eye, and ear, and every sense is captive,
And thrall for ever to the comely Goth.
Why should the spirit of my father vex me?
Behold, I give to him a worthier son!
And though he be barbarian who woos me,
The Roman bride shall wed his heart to Rome.

IV.

One thing I owe—beyond all ransom precious—
To father, brother, and Imperial name,
The chastity that makes me worth the winning,
A virgin love unstained of force or guile.
For this I thank thee, Theodosius, father;
For this, Honorius, thy fraternal name;
Nor thee the less, thou sleeping soul of honour,
That no barbarian art in sense of law.
For this, to silk and purple, crowns historic,
Goblets of gold and priceless spoil of pearl,—

To all the glories of the cunning workman,
Sculptured, or graven, or inlaid with gems,—
To all the glittering legacies of triumph,
And hoarded trophies of a thousand years,—
To all the wealth of harvest, pasture, vintage,
To corn and cattle, oil, and spice, and wine,—
Yea, to the sacred things of God, most welcome!
Since thou hast kept *me* sacred, even from thee.
The noon consumes me in the thick pavilion,
Yet I am fain of close-drawn solitude,
Lest I should look upon the godless riot,
That, once seen, haunts me like a dream of shame.
For all around the large-limbed Goths were lying
Beneath the plane-trees—yet but half-perceived
'Mid soft entanglement of arms and tresses
By captive beauty wreathed around its lords;
The pride of Romans, daughters of great houses,
Hiding their faces from my pitying gaze
In hideous refuge of barbarian bosoms . . .
God pardon them the wrong He hindered not!

God take my thanks for what is more than empire,
And speed the warrior whom no greedy haste
Hath spurred beyond the pace of loyal loving,
The pure caress, and broken utterance
Of mingling tongues half-learnt in march of conquest,—
To which the ordered flow of Roman speech
Is feeble,—rich in sweetest hesitations,
And wishful voids of tongueless eloquence.
He stirs, and this pavilion's girth becometh
My orb of lands, and hallowed round of love.
He wakes, and country is a dream forgotten:
Where thou, Adolphus, art, there is my Rome.

MUTE DISCOURSE.

"Fulmina . . . . cœlo nulla sereno."—LUCRETIUS.

GOD speaks by silence. Voice-dividing man,
Who cannot triumph but he saith, Aha—
Who cannot suffer without Woe is me—
Who, ere obedience follow on the will,
Must say, Thou shalt—who, looking back, saith Then,
And forward, Then; and feebly nameth, Now,
His changing foothold 'twixt eternities;
Whose love is pain until it finds a voice—
Whose seething anger bubbles in a curse—
Who summarises truth in party-cries,
And bounds the universe with category,—

This word-dividing, speech-preëminent man,
Deeming his Maker even as himself,
Must find Him in a voice ere he believe.
We fret at silence, and our turbulent hearts
Say, "If He be a God He will speak out."
We rail at silence, and would fain disturb
The duly ordered course of signless years.
We moan at silence, till our quivering need
Becomes incarnate, and our sore desire
Passes into a voice. Then say we, "Lo,
He is, for He hath spoken; thus and thus
He said."
So ever radiating self,
Conditioning a God to our degree,
We make a word the top of argument--
Fond weaklings we, whose utmost scope and goal
Is but a pillared formula whereon
To hang the garlands of our faith and love.
Well was it in the childhood of the world

To cry for open vision and a voice:
But in the riper time, when we have reached
The kindly heart of universal law,
And safe assurance of essential good,
Say, rather, now that had there been *no* God,
There had been *many* voices, freaks of sound,
Capricious thunders in unclouded skies,
Portentous utterance on the trembling hills,
And Pythian antics in oracular caves—
Yea, signs and wonders had been multiplied,
And god succeeded god, the latest ever
Lord-paramount, until the crazèd world
Had lost its judgment 'mid contending claims.
Oh men! It is the child's heart in the man's
That will not rest without a lullaby—
That will not trust the everlasting arm
Unless it hear the voice in tale or song.
It is the child's heart in the man's that seeks,
In elements of old Semitic thought,

And wondrous syllables of Grecian tongue,
Recorded witness of another way
Of things than that which God hath willed to be
Our daily life. And if in times of old
The child-heart caught at wonder, and the charm
Of sundered system—if untutored faith
Found confirmation in arrested suns,
And gnomon-shadows of reverted hours,
And in the agonised Thus saith the Lord
Of mantled seers with fateful burden bowed—
We, children of a clearer, purer light
(Despising not the day of smaller things,
Nor calling out to kick the ladder foot
Because our finger-tips have verged on rest)—
We, youths, whose spring brings on the lawful hope
To loose the girdle of the maiden Truth,—
We, men, whose joyous summer morn hath heard
The marriage bell of Reason and of Faith—
We, turning from the windy ways of the world,

And gazing nearly on the silent march
Of love in law, and law in love, proclaim
"In that He works in silence He is God!"
So, from the very permanence of things,
And voiceless continuity of love,
Unmixed with human passion, fretted not
By jealousy, impatience, or revenge,
We gather courage, and confirm our faith.
So, casting back the scoffer's words, we say,
Even because there is no fitful sign,
And since our fathers fell asleep all things
Continue as at first—this wonder of no change
Reputes the God, to whom a thousand years
Are as one day. Yea, to the willing ear,
The dumb supremacy of patience speaks
Louder than Sinai. And if yet we lack
The witness and the voucher of a voice,
What hindereth that we who stand between
The living Nature and the living God,

Between them, yet in both—their ministers—
By noble life and converse pure, should be
Ourselves the very voice of God on earth,
Living epistles, known and read of all!
  Oh Brothers! Were we wholly soul-possessed
With this Divine regard—would we but soar
Beyond the cloud, and centralise our faith
Upon the stable sun—would we reject
Kaleidoscopic views of broken truth
Distorted to the turn of perverse will—
Make daylight through traditionary ranks
Of intervening hells, and fix the eye
Upon the shining heart of Supreme Love,—
Would we . . . But why prolong the bootless
  "would?"—
I, who know all the weakness and the fear,
The weary ways of labyrinthine doubt,
The faintness on the dizzy height—who lack
The Gabriel-pinion wherewithal to range

The unsupporting medium of pure sky—
Who know the struggle of the natural soul,
Breathing a finer ether than its own—
Who, venturing on specular power too vast,
Scathed by my own reflector, fall down blind;
Who, at the least wind of calamity,
Drag shiftlessly the anchor of my hope,
And, shrieking from the waves, catch gladly at
A Name and Sake wherewith to close a prayer!
  Yet though I faint and fail, I may not take
My weakness for the Truth, nor dare misread
The manual sign of God upon the heart,
The pledge, beyond the power of any voice,
Of sure advance unto the perfect whole;
Nor treat the tablet-tracing of His hand
As it were some old tombstone left apart
In grave-yard places for the years to hide
Deep in irrelevant and noxious growth.
Oh, Brothers! push the weeds aside, lay bare

The monument, and clear the earthy mould
From the Divine intaglio. Read thereon
The uncancelled charter of your native hope,
Nor crave articulate thunders any more.
Read there the universal law of good;
Unqualified evangel; blessedness,
The birthright of all being; peace, that lends
No weak subscription unto sin, and yet
Disarms despair. Read, and believe no more
In final triumph of concreted sin
If any soul that cometh forth from God,
And lives, and moves, and hath its being in Him.
Read thus, and pray the while that he who writes
Reck his own rede.

Oh, Sister! would I bruise
The snowy petals of thy prayerful faith,
Or chill the tendril-twinings of thy hope
With evil influence of wintry scorn?
Would God that any faith of mine could give

Such quiet stability unto my feet
As thine to thine! Oh, if thy kneeling wakes
A smile at all, 'tis Heaven that smiles because
Thou ask'st so little! God will o'erfulfil
Thy dreams of silver with unmeted gold.
Oh, Sister, though thou dost believe in wrath,
Though shapes of woe flit through thine imagery,
Though thou hast ta'en the cloud into thy faith,
The little rift of blue that breaks thy dark
Brings thee more comfort and more fixèd hope
Than unto me this cloudless open vast
Wherein my soul floats weary and alone!
  Yet think not we are voyaging apart
To different havens. Truth is one. Yet One
Alone hath reached it in straight course. Each soul
Hath its own track, its currents, and its gales;
And each toward sequel of attainment must
Fetch many a compass. Some keep land in view—
The beacon-hills of old authority—

And draw assurance from a shore defined,
Though it be dire with cloud, and capes of wrath;
While some shoot boldly into perilous seas—
Pacific-seeming seas, yet not without
A weary loneliness of land forsook,
And fear of sudden cyclone, and still more
Deceitful calm. Or, if the metaphor
Be yet too cruel for a sister's heart,
Oh, think that in the common way of love
We are never out of hearing; but may each,
Whene'er we will, join hand with each, and say,
"God—Father—Love," the triune sum of Truth,
And Watchword of the universal Christ.

Sister, I think, and in the thought take heart,
That when the Day of Reconcilement comes,
As come it will, the all-transmuting Truth
May find affinities in things that seem
To us the very elements of war.

Dost thou remember how in childhood's days,

One gave us wit to recognise the south
By turning faceward to the mid-day sun;
And we believed, and took the facile plan
For unexceptioned law? But even now
I hear the chime of Austral noon, and, lo,
The sun is in the north! Yet 'tis the same
Bright sun that shone and shines upon us both,
On me the evil, and on thee the good:
Yea, more, it is the same, noon-glaring here,
That now with hints of orient twilight steals
Over the stillness of thy morning dreams.
Dost thou remember how in those old days,
The dear old days that ne'er may come again—
Though love, like history, repeats itself,
But with the larger feature, stronger hand,
And keener sense, evoked of common grief—
When we would scan the circling mountain-cope
That made our little valley all a world,
One taught our young unlearnèd lips to say,

" The Sensible Horizon ;" then dissolved
Our bounded dream, and showed our widening
minds
That this was not the limit of the truth,
But grew from our own petty finitude ; and far
In unconceived remote another line,
Yet only in concession named a line,
" The Rational," made space intelligible,
And gave relations to the stars. Yet not
The less our early, mountain-narrowed sky
Was still *the* sky to us, cloud, storm, and all.
Oh take my parable, and fondly think
That though the years have brought me wider range,
And shifting zeniths been my law of life,
Did thou and I yet tread the native vale,
I not the less, beneath that homely sky,
Would point to it whene'er we spoke of heaven.
Oh bear my parable ; and if it be
Within permitted bounds of reverence

To round a solemn theme with gentle jest,
The mingling import of familiar words
May bridge our difference, since in daily speech
The sensible and rational are one.

Watson, Ferguson, & Co., Brisbane.

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n or before